NATION

Armed forces ready for Op Sindoor 2.0: Army Chief

≫ Page: 4 ≪

BUSINESS

Govt flags oil, El Nino risks to economy

≫ Page: 7 ≪

SPORTS

Djokovic's loss to teen Fonseca ensures a new Grand Slam winner

≫ Page: 8 ≪

www.twitter.com/EnglishSalar
www.facebook.com/EnglishSalar
www.instagram.com/dailysalarenglish
youtube.com/@dailysalardigital

SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڈھ روزنامہ بنگلور

Website: salarnews.in | www.magzter.com | 31 MAY 2026 | SUNDAY | BENGALURU | 13 DHU'L-HIJJAH 1447 H | Vol 5 | Issue No 139 | Pages: 8

RCB EYES 2nd IPL title; B'luru imposes celebration curbs

AHMEDABAD, 30 MA

Defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) will start as favourites when they face 2022 winners Gujarat Titans in the IPL 2026 final on Sunday.

In what promises to be a fascinating clash of contrasting styles, the well-balanced and fearless RCB will look to overcome a composed Gujarat side and secure a second successive title. RCB's aggressive, high-risk approach throughout the tournament has made them the team to beat.

Meanwhile, Bengaluru Police have imposed strict restrictions on public screenings and victory celebrations to maintain law and order. The measures follow the June 2025 crowd crush near M. Chinnaswamy Stadium that claimed 11 lives.

Public-facing screens, roadside LED displays, victory processions and street celebrations have been banned without official permission. *—PTI*

>>>More on Pages 2 and 8

Abhishek attacked with stones, eggs

KOLKATA, 30 MAY

Scores of people hurled stones, eggs and abuses at TMC general secretary Abhishek Banerjee, who escaped the mob wearing a cricket helmet and helped by aides on Saturday in Sonarpur town of West Bengal. Banerjee was attacked when he went to visit the victims of post-poll violence, and later claimed that BJP activists were trying to kill him. In a dramatic and unprecedented outburst of public anger, unidentified people scuffled with the leader and roughed him up . The situation quickly spiralled into chaos, with some members of the crowd physically attack Banerjee by raining blows and kicks on him. Wearing a police-issued helmet for protection, the TMC leader was seen with his shirt torn amid the melee. *—PTI*

>>>MORE ON PAGE 3

Teen stabbed to death in Ghaziabad

GHAZIABAD, 30 MAY

A Class 11 student stabbed during an altercation in Ghaziabad has died during treatment, police said on Saturday. Surya Chauh, 17, a resident of Navneet Vihar Colony in Khoda, was admitted to a local hospital with stab wounds on 28 May. Chauhan's family members alleged that he received a call asking him to come to a meeting spot on 28 May. They claimed that as he went there, an argument broke out after which he was stabbed. However, according to some reports, Chauhan's mother has alleged that her son was killed because he had said that he had not seen any goat being slaughtered during Eid "A boy tricked my child into calling him. He was asked if he had ever seen a goat being slaughtered, to which he replied no. Then my child was stabbed," the deceased mother told ANI on Friday. *—PTI*

Congress leaders put up a united front as DK Shivakumar submits claim to form government to Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot, with former CM Siddaramaiah by his side, on Saturday *—MOHAMMED ASAD*

No rift, just a shift: DKS to take oath as CM on 3 June

Will return to power in K'taka in 2028, says Congress

BENGALURU, 30 MAY

Karnataka Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot on Saturday formally invited DK Shivakumar to form the next government in the state, paving the way for his swearing-in as Chief Minister on 3 June at 4.05pm at Lok Bhavan in Bengaluru.

The invitation came after Shivakumar, elected leader of the Congress Legislature Party (CLP), submitted a formal claim to form the government. In his communication, the Governor invited Shivakumar and his Council of Ministers to take the oath of office.

Earlier in the day, the CLP unanimously elected Shivakumar as its leader at a meeting in Vidhana Soudha, following the resignation of outgoing Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on 28 May. Siddaramaiah himself proposed Shivakumar's name, which was seconded by senior leader G Parameshwara.

> Venugopal said everybody thought this transition of power from Siddaramaiah to Shivakumar would create trouble for Congress. Some people in the media also thought that a major shake-up was going to happen in Congress, but nothing of that sort happened, he said.

AICC General Secretary KC Venugopal said the Congress high command, led by Mallikarjun Kharge, Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, ensured a smooth transition of power. He said Shivakumar would take oath along with his team on 3 June.

Venugopal expressed confidence that under Shivakumar's leadership, the Congress would return to power in Karnataka in the 2028 Assembly elections. He said the transition reflected strong coordination within the party and dismissed speculation of internal rifts.

At the CLP meeting, Shivakumar moved a resolution appreciating Siddaramaiah's contribution. Leaders said Siddaramaiah's leadership would continue to guide the party in the future.

Congress leaders put up a show of unity. Dinesh Gundu Rao called the development an "unforgettable" moment that demonstrated collective decision-making, while Priyank Kharge said the government would focus on development, job creation and strengthening the party's return to power in 2028. Leaders stressed that differences within the party had been overstated in public discourse and that the organisation remained fully cohesive.

Congress MLA N A Haris said Cabinet formation would be decided by the party high command. *—ANI*

>>>More on Page 2

CUET delayed after technical glitches

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

The Centre faced fresh criticism over the conduct of national examinations on Saturday after a technical glitch delayed the Common University Entrance Test-Undergraduate (CUET-UG) 2026 at several centres across the country.

The National Testing Agency (NTA) said more than 3,765 candidates who completed biometric registration but left their examination centres before the test resumed would be given a one-time opportunity to reappear. The revised examination date will be announced separately.

According to the NTA, a technical issue at the end of service provider TCS iON delayed the commencement of the morning shift at some centres. While around 95 per cent of candidates eventually completed the examination after it resumed, thousands reportedly left due to the prolonged delay.

The agency said the affected candidates would not be disadvantaged and confirmed that TCS iON had been directed to conduct an immediate root-cause analysis. The NTA apologised for the disruption and provided a helpline and email support for students and parents. Examination timings were revised at affected centres. Morning-shift candidates were given the full duration of the test, while the afternoon session began an hour later than scheduled, with entry from 2.30 pm and the examination starting at 4 pm.

> **NEET, CBSE, SSC, and today, CUET. Four examinations. One crore students. Not a single one could be conducted honestly. Claims of being a 'vishwaguru', but are unable to conduct even a single examination within the country**
>
> —Rahul Gandhi, Congress Leader

TCS Chief Executive and Managing Director K Krithivasan described the incident as a "brief technical issue" that caused a delay of about two hours. He said the problem had been promptly resolved and did not affect the integrity of the examination.

Students and parents, however, complained of poor communication and long waits at examination centres, with some alleging they had travelled long distances only to face hours of uncertainty.

The disruption has renewed concerns over the management of major national examinations. Since its launch in 2022, CUET-UG has witnessed repeated operational issues, including centre changes, delayed starts, technical failures, cancellations and rescheduled tests, raising questions about the smooth conduct of the country's second-largest entrance examination. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 4

NTA said candidates who completed biometric registration but left their centres would be given a one-time opportunity to reappear *—PTI*

B'LURU OPPOSES SIR

Citizens protest against the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) scheduled to begin in Karnataka on 20 June, in Bengaluru on Saturday *—MOHAMMED ASAD*

US says 'return home' rule not for all Green Card applicants

WASHINGTON, 30 MAY

The US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has clarified that not all immigrants seeking green cards will be required to return to their home countries to complete the process, softening an earlier announcement that sparked concern among applicants.

A DHS spokesperson said the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) memo of 22 May was only a reminder of existing discretionary authority and not a blanket policy change. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

The clarification followed reports that applicants for permanent residency may be asked to leave the US, particularly those overstaying visas or from countries with high reliance on public assistance.

Officials said the move was intended as a "housekeeping" measure. However, immigration lawyers continue to advise caution due to lack of clarity. In 2024, about 14 lakh green cards were issued, including over 8.2 lakh adjustments of status within the US. Analysts estimate over 30,000 Indian H1B holders become eligible annually. *—PTI*

9 with links to Pak's ISI held, had 'planned' terror attacks in Delhi

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

The Special Cell of the Delhi Police has arrested nine suspected operatives linked to a ISI-Mumbai underworld network that was allegedly planning attacks on vital installations and security personnel in the national capital, an official said on Saturday.

Police said arms and explosives have been recovered from the possession of the accused during the operation.

The arrests were made following a sustained investigation and intelligence-based operation. Officials said the module was under surveillance for some time before coordinated action was taken to apprehend its members.

The nine operatives were allegedly working at the behest of handlers associated with Pakistan's espionage, Inter-Services Intelligence and the Mumbai underworld. They had allegedly been tasked with carrying out attacks on sensitive targets in Delhi, he said.

The Delhi Police is also probing possible cross-border linkages, funding channels and the role of overseas handlers in directing the activities of the module, officials said. Further details are awaited. *—PTI*

'FOUGHT FOR EVERY POINT'

Vinesh's comeback ends as she loses in trials for Asian Games

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

The cheers were loud, emotions raw, and expectations of a fairytale comeback unmistakable, but Vinesh Phogat's return to competitive wrestling ended in disappointment on Saturday after a 4-6 loss to Meenakshi Goyat in the 53kg semifinals of the Asian Games selection trials.

The result dashed Phogat's hopes of re-entering the national team after her traumatic exit from the 2024 Paris Olympics. Despite the defeat, she said she did not consider it a failure.

"I do not feel I have failed. I was fighting a whole system. We had to fight for every point. I was not given a fair deal," she said.

Her comeback was marked by controversy even before she stepped on the mat. During the official weigh-in, she was initially told she would only be allowed to compete in the 50kg category, her previous division. Phogat strongly objected, alleging discrimination by the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI). Following her protest, federation president Sanjay Singh intervened and permitted her entry into the 53kg category.

Vinesh Phogat during the Asian Games selection trials *—PTI*

Weighing 53.9kg, she entered the draw and opened her campaign with a commanding 7-1 win over Jyoti. She then survived a tense and controversial quarterfinal against Nishu Kumari, where her experience helped her prevail in a fiercely contested bout amid high drama and protests.

However, the physically and emotionally draining contest appeared to take its toll. Against Asian Championship silver medallist Meenakshi Goyat in the semifinal, Phogat struggled to maintain intensity and eventually lost a close contest 4-6, bringing her campaign to an abrupt end. Earlier in the day, Phogat had declared her intent to continue in the sport for at least two more years, signalling determination despite setbacks. Her return, though short of a fairytale finish, highlighted both her resilience and the challenges she continues to face in rebuilding her competitive career after the Olympic heartbreak. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 8

Haryana suspends net amid temple, mosque demolition

CHANDIGARH, 30 MAY

The Faridabad administration on Saturday demolished several allegedly illegal structures, including a mosque at Masjid Chowk in the NIT-3 area, to clear land for the proposed Namo Bharat RRTS corridor and an elevated road project.

A temple, four shops and a house were also razed during the early morning operation, carried out in compliance with National Green Tribunal (NGT) orders.

Debris removal was underway later in the day.

The demolition drive began at 4 am under the supervision of Municipal Corporation Additional Commissioner Paramjit Singh Chahal.

Heavy police deployment, led by a DCP-rank officer, ensured tight security and restricted movement in the area.

Ahead of the operation, the Haryana government suspended mobile internet, bulk SMS and dongle services across parts of the NIT Zone until 10 pm on Saturday to maintain law and order.

Barricades were erected from 2am, and traffic was diverted from several key roads.

Congress MLA Aftab Ahmed reached the area after learning of the mosque's demolition but was stopped by police and briefly staged a protest, calling the action "destruction" rather than development. *—PTI*

Fire at Bengaluru private school, none hurt

BENGALURU, 30 MAY

A fire erupted at a private school in Nagadevanahalli on Saturday morning, police confirmed. The incident occurred around 9.30am, with no injuries or casualties reported. Three fire tenders were deployed to extinguish the blaze, which caused thick smoke to fill the building after it started in an auditorium on the fourth floor. As it was a Saturday, the school was closed for regular classes, but some students attending an orientation session were evacuated safely along with staff, a senior police officer said. Preliminary investigations suggest a short circuit may have caused the fire, but a detailed probe is underway. The fire was subsequently brought under control, police added. —*PTI*

3 boys drown in Dharwad during summer swim

DHARWAD, 30 MAY

Three minor boys drowned while swimming in a lake near Singanahalli village in Dharwad district on Saturday, police said. The victims, were aged 12, 15 and 16, and were all related. Two were residents of Singanahalli, while the third had come from Bailhongal taluk to stay with relatives. Dharwad Superintendent of Police Gunjan Arya said preliminary investigations suggest the boys entered the water using a thermocol sheet as a floating aid. They allegedly got trapped in heavy silt deposits at the bottom of the lake and drowned. A boy fishing nearby noticed the incident and alerted his parents, who informed authorities. Police and fire personnel launched a rescue operation and recovered all three bodies. Authorities will conduct awareness programmes on water safety for children and parents during summer vacations. —*PTI*

No free Metro for RCB fans on Sunday: BMRCL

BENGALURU, 30 MAY

Bengaluru Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) on Friday denied social media claims that RCB fans would get free metro travel on May 31 in connection with the IPL final in Ahmedabad, calling the advertisements circulated by private individuals and entities false. BMRCL said it had neither announced nor approved any free travel scheme for RCB fans or any other passenger category for Sunday. Stating that no individual, organisation, or entity had been authorised to advertise or represent that metro travel would be free on that date. Instead, commuters are required to purchase standard fare tickets on the match day. The public has been advised to disregard unauthorised posts and verify information only through official BMRCL channels. —*SALAR NEWS*

CLASSIFIED

CLOSING DOWN SALE
RAYMOND DISCOUNT SHOP
PICK ANY ITEM Rs. 500/- only
2 Nos. Raymond T/W Pant Pc
2 Nos. Raymond Shirt Pc
Raymond Pant Pc + Shirt Pc
COMBO GIFT BOX
RAYMOND 3Pc SUIT Length Rs.1000/-
AT NEW M.N. Next to K.F.C
DISPENSARY Rd. OFF COMMERCIAL
BANGALORE-1 Mob: 9343 03 7218

CM can change, but problems remain: BJP

Bommai says get finances in order, Chalavadi says 'super corrupt govt' continues

BENGALURU, 30 MAY

The State BJP said on Saturday that it didn't matter if the Chief Minister changed, because the problems across Karnataka were not resolved by outgoing CM Siddaramaiah.

BJP MP and former chief minister Basavaraj S Bommai that the change was unlikely to bring "any relief or significant change for the common people."

He alleged that that Karnataka was burdened with rising debt, and fiscal mismanagement.

"There is an atmosphere of despair among people due to the lack of good governance and development. People, especially the OBC community, are continuously experiencing frustration, the impact of which will be seen in future elections," Bommai told reporters.

"The first priority should be to set their finances in order," he said, alleging that if things continued by the end of Congress term, the State would have a Rs 10 lakh crore loan burden.

Congress leaders Siddaramaiah, KC Venugopal and next Chief Minister DK Shivakumar at Vidhana Soudha in City, on Saturday —*MOHAMMED ASAD*

Similarly, Leader of Opposition (LoP) in the Legislative Council Chalavadi Narayanaswamy said that State would continue to see a "super corrupt government".

"It has been corrupt until now, and we will only continue to see a super corrupt government after this transition," he told press. "The people of Karnataka are completely fed up with this administration because there is zero development in the State. This is why the government needs to go. The poorer sections of Karnataka are strongly against this system, and they are now entirely in favour of the BJP."

"I believe a mere change in leadership will not change anything except the person in charge. Don't take the people of Karnataka for granted," he added.

Meanwhile, BJP MLA S Suresh Kumar on Saturday urged Siddaramaiah to explain the fate of Rs 5,000 crore allegedly meant for beneficiaries of the Gruha Lakshmi scheme, claiming that payments for February and March 2025 had not reached eligible families. He said he should pay the dues to the beneficiaries before demitting office.

In a letter addressed to Siddaramaiah, the Rajajinagar MLA said the issue was first raised in the Assembly by BJP legislator Mahesh Tenginakai during the winter session at Belagavi's Suvarna Soudha on 9 December and remained unanswered. —*Agencies*

With no clarity on DyCM post, lobbying continues

BENGALURU, 30 MAY

With no solid clarity on the Deputy Chief Minister (DyCM) post in the DK Shivakumar-led government, groups continued to lobby for the leader of their choice. It is unclear how many DyCM's the government would have, but sources suggest it could be up to four.

Contenders include PWD Minister Satish Jarkiholi, Home Minister G Parameshwara, Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre, MLC Yathindra Siddaramaiah and Rural and Panchayat Development Minister Priyank Kharge.

YATHINDRA

In Mysuru, Members of Karnataka State Backward Classes Forum have demanded that the Yathindra becomes the DyCM, noting that the AHINDA group had voted primarily for the Congress and should be adequately represented. Siddaramaiah has reportedly sought a key position for Yathindra.

Addressing the meeting at Jaladarshini Guest House State Backward Classes Forum President KS Shivaramu urged the Congress High Command to respect Siddaramaiah, and

The forum also asked that the new government accepts the Socio-Economic Survey, known as the caste census, and implement the recommendations.

KHANDRE

On Saturday, nearly 40 Lingayat seers demanded that Khandre be made DyCM. Community leader Guru Basava Pattadevaru said "If Khandre is not given the post, then the Lingayat community will teach the Congress a lesson in the next Assembly elections."

Khandre, a Veerashaiva-Lingayat leader believed his hard work would be duly recognised.

"There is a feeling in the community that Lingayat should be given due representation in the Cabinet," he said, noting that there were 36 MLAs from the community in office.

PRIYANK

Congress MLC Jagdev Guttedar said that Priyank should be made the DyCM. "(When the) Opposition attacks our party, the person who reacts immediately is Priyank," Guttedar noted, claiming that making him the DyCM would strengthen the party's position.

PARAMESHWARA

Dalit organisations protested in the City and demanded that Parameshwara become the Chief Minister instead of Shivakumar. The Karnataka Dalit Sangathan alleged that injustice was meted out to Parameshwara.

MUNIYAPPA

Meanwhile, leaders of the Dalit community protested at the Kempegowda International Airport when AICC Karnataka in-charge Randeep Singh Surjewala was due to arrive.

Leaders of the Madara Mahasabha and various Dalit organisations demanded that Food Minister KH Muniyappa be given the DyCM post.

—*Salar swith agencies*

DKS: Cong's troubleshooter & Kanakapura's strongman

BENGALURU, 30 MAY

DK Shivakumar's rise from Dodda Alahalli village near Kanakapura to Karnataka's top political office spans four decades marked by resilience, political skill and unwavering loyalty to the Congress.

Popularly known as "Kanakapura Bande" (the granite rock of Kanakapura), he first contested the Sathanur Assembly seat in 1985 and entered the Assembly in 1989. Since then, he has won eight consecutive Assembly elections. Over time, the 64-year-old emerged as the Congress' principal Vokkaliga leader and earned a reputation as the party's trusted troubleshooter.

His political management skills came to national attention in 2017 when he was tasked with safeguarding 42 Gujarat Congress MLAs in Bengaluru ahead of the Rajya Sabha elections, helping secure Ahmed Patel's victory. The period was followed by Income Tax and Enforcement Directorate actions, which the Congress termed politically motivated. Shivakumar was arrested in 2019 and spent 50 days in Delhi's Tihar Jail, but remained firmly with the party.

> **He is not a one-day Chief Minister or one-time CM. He will play a long innings. His horoscope is very good. He will be there for Karnataka for a longer period of time**
>
>
>
> -Dwarakanath Guruji, DKS' Astrologer

In 2020, amid a severe downturn for the Congress after the 2018 Assembly polls, the 2019 Lok Sabha rout and the collapse of the Congress-JD(S) government, he was appointed KPCC President. Under his leadership, the Congress staged a dramatic revival, winning 134 seats in the 2023 Assembly elections and returning to power. The party's strength rose to 140 with independent support. He also improved the Congress tally in Karnataka from one Lok Sabha seat in 2019 to nine in 2024.

Born on 15 May, 1962, he is married to Usha and has three children. —*PTI*

DK Shivakumar proved his loyality to the Congress when he went to Tihar Jail for 50 days in 2019 —*x*

1 killed, 20 hurt as luxury bus overturns in Ankola

KARWAR, 30 MAY

A serious road accident occurred on NH-52 near Kanchinabagilu in Ankola taluk, Uttara Kannada district, involving a Sea Bird transport bus. The bus, carrying tourists from Ballari to Goa, lost control and overturned, resulting in one passenger's death and over 20 seriously injured.

Preliminary reports suggest overspeeding and driver loss of control as the primary causes. The bus, which was completely blocking the highway, had 36 passengers onboard.

The deceased, Sharanayya, 42, from Andhra Pradesh, died instantly due to excessive blood loss. Many passengers sustained serious injuries, while others suffered minor injuries. Local residents and police responded swiftly, rescuing and transporting the injured to Ankola Taluk Hospital, with some referred to Karwar Institute of Medical Sciences (KRIMS).

—*SALAR*

The overturned bus caused a major traffic jam, with long queues forming on both sides of the highway. A crane was brought in by Ankola police to clear the road and restore normal traffic. A case has been registered. —*Salar News*

Shobha seeks Lokayukta probe into Rs 39,437cr grant for BWSSB

BENGALURU, 30 MAY

BJP MP Shobha Karandlaje alleged massive irregularities in solid waste management contracts worth Rs 39,437 crore that was recently approved by the State government. In a statement on X on Saturday, the Bengaluru North MP demanded either a Lokayakuta or CBI probe into the mater, alleging that the BWSSB tenders were issued to companies that the Finance Department had earlier disqualified from the process.

The Cabinet recently granted approval to the Delhi-based MSW Solutions Ltd, connect to Ramky Group. The group will process and dispose of the City's 5,200 tonnes of waste for the next 30 years, single-handedly.

However, Karandlaje noted that the Finance Department had repeatedly issued tenders for the massive project.

In a letter to Chief Secretary Shalini Rajneesh the first tender, Karandlaje said, was cancelled under questionable circumstance, and the second tender saw technical disqualification of all participants. But in the third tender, the same entities were treated as qualified.

"Such unexplained reversal creates a strong apprehension of manipulation in technical evaluation to suit predetermined private interests," she stated.

Additionally, she alleged that the Detailed Project Report (DPR) consultant was changed to M/s BCG after a report was already prepared by M/s Rites Limited, alleging that costs had been massively inflated.

Furthermore, she claimed that the lowest quoted bid was significantly higher than acceptable tender limits.

The lowest quoted bids were reportedly far beyond acceptable tender limits, and despite negotiations, the final accepted rates remained substantially above the prescribed threshold.

"What renders this matter even more serious is that official Finance Department had categorically rejected critical aspects of the proposal," Karandlaje wrote.

She alleged that the Finance Department had flagged major lapses in land acquisition costs for the project, but these seemed to have been ignored.

She asked if the Cabinet had been fully apprised of all the developments. —*Salar News*

Caretaker, accomplice held for Rs 1.2 cr gold theft in Belagavi

BELAGAVI, 30 MAY

Two men have been arrested in connection with the theft of gold jewellery worth approximately Rs 1.2 crore from a doctor's residence in Belagavi. The accused, identified as Rahul Satish Kamble, 27, a native of Kagawad, and Babasaheb Katageri, allegedly helped Kamble dispose of the stolen gold.

The theft occurred at Dr Vishwanath Dhaded's home in the Camp police station limits, with a complaint lodged on 11 May by his wife, Annapurna Dhaded. Police recovered 350 grams of gold worth Rs 52.5 lakh and Rs 22.8 lakh in cash, amounting to total recoveries of Rs 75.3 lakh.

Kamble, who joined as a caretaker in December to care for Dr Vishwanath Dhaded, was suspected of stealing gradually over nearly three months. Police said the theft was executed without forced entry, exploiting a flaw in the old locker.

The accused attempted to sell the gold with Katageri's help. Police are working to recover remaining valuables. Belagavi Police Commissioner Bhushan Borase advised storing valuables in bank lockers and installing burglar alarms for security. —*Salar News*

SWIMMING LESSONS MANDATORY?

Commuters wade through waterlogged Cubbon Road in Bengaluru on Saturday. Social media has been abuzz with complaints about flooding and poor drainage whenever the City receives heavy rain —*MOHAMMED ASAD*

'WILL LAY SIEGE TO SITE'

Tamil Nadu farmers protest proposed Mekedatu reservoir

NAGAPATTINAM, 30 MAY

Tamil Nadu farmers protested the proposed Mekedatu Balancing Reservoir act in on the Nagapattinam-Chidambaram Road, causing a brief traffic disruption on Saturday.

The protests come in response to Karnataka's Irrigation Minister and upcoming Chief Minister DK Shivakumar remarks that Tamil Nadu "has no right" to object to the massive dam on the Cauvery river. Shivakumar said earlier this month that a Detailed Project Report (DPR) had been prepared and would be submitted to the Centre for approval soon.

The protest was organised jointly by the Tamil Nadu Farmers Protection Association and the Joint Action Committee of Tamil Nadu Farmers' Associations. They urged the TVK government under C Jospeh Vijay as well as the Centre to ensure that the dam was stopped and also demanded the immediate implementation of the farm loan waiver promised by the Tamil Nadu government during the election campaign. Vijay has also brought the dam to the attention of the Prime Minister.

Tamil Nadu farmers protest in Nagapattinam, seeking a halt to the Mekedatu dam that could affect lakhs of ryots on the Cauvery delta —*ANI*

More than 500 farmers from Nagapattinam, Tiruvarur, and Karaikal districts participated in the demonstration, which resulted in minor clashes between police and the protesters. Many were detained.

Meanwhile, a group of farmers from delta districts embarked on a journey to Mekedatu in Karnataka where they have planned to lay siege to the site where the Karnataka government plans to build the dam.

Thamizhaga Cauvery Vivasayigal Sangam general secretary PR Pandian lambasted Shivakumar and announced that the farmers would protest on 31 May. He said the farmers would not allow Shivakumar to build the dam. —*Agencies*

—ANI

Former Keralam minister TU Kuruvila dies at 89

KOCHI, 30 MAY

TU Kuruvila, former Kerala Minister and Kerala Congress (Joseph) vice-chairman, passed away late Friday night at a private hospital, party sources said. Aged 89, he had been undergoing treatment for age-related ailments. Kuruvila served as Public Works Minister under VS Achuthanandan and represented Kothamangalam from 2006 to 2011. He also served on the Rubber Board and as chairman of the Kerala Housing Board. Chief Minister VD Satheesan described Kuruvila as a steadfast Kerala Congress leader who stood with PJ Joseph. Leader of the Opposition Vijayan lauded his contributions, highlighting his close bond with the people and long public service, calling his death an "irreparable loss." —*PTI*

Women voters lead in Himachal panchayat polls

SHIMLA, 30 MAY

Women led the final phase of Himachal Pradesh's panchayat elections, outnumbering men across 10 districts despite rain and storms. Overall turnout exceeded 76 per cent, with Sirmaur district recording 81.34 per cent and Chamba 72.47 per cent. Union Minister JP Nadda, voting in Bilaspur, said, "The strength of democracy lies in active citizen participation." Women outpolled men in 10 districts, with 79.46 per cent versus 73.82 per cent among men. Polling ran from 7am to 3pm, and the percentage is expected to rise. Results for gram panchayats, pradhans, and upa-pradhans will be announced on Saturday, with other results on 31 May. —*PTI*

'No valuables missing from Keralam temple'

T'PURAM, 30 MAY

The Travancore royal family refuted allegations of valuables missing from Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple. Aditya Varma, a family member, stated all valuables are present near Lord Vishnu in the form of Anantha Padmanabhaswamy. He questioned the police report claiming valuables were missing, saying, "The police, the shrine's administrative committee's chairman, and other members were unaware of any missing valuables." Verification confirmed items were in their usual place. The government launched an investigation into security lapses. The temple committee reported that the "missing" diamond ornament was secure inside the sanctum. The treasures, revealed in 2011, are estimated to be worth billions of dollars in value. —*PTI*

India recalls Ziaur Rahman's role in Bangladesh war

DHAKA, 30 MAY

The Indian High Commission in Dhaka recalled former Bangladesh president Ziaur Rahman's role in the 1971 Liberation War, saying India stood alongside the people of Bangladesh then and continues to do so now, as it marked the 45th anniversary of his death. "We recall his famous radio address of March 1971, which electrified the masses," the mission said in a statement on Saturday, describing Zia as "one of Bangladesh's bravest sons."A Major in the Pakistan Army in 1971, Zia proclaimed Bangladesh's independence on behalf of the country's founding father, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, from the Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra in Chattogram. His address came after Pakistani troops launched "Operation Searchlight" on 25 March 1971 in Dhaka. —*PTI*

Abhishek attacked with stones, eggs in West Bengal

They tried to kill me, says TMC Gen Secy

KOLKATA, 30 MAY

TMC National General Secretary Abhishek Banerjee was attacked by an angry crowd in Sonarpur on Saturday while visiting the family of a party worker allegedly killed in post-poll violence, hours after being served a CID summons in a separate forgery investigation.

Banerjee faced stone and egg pelting, verbal abuse and physical jostling from protesters in the Kamrabad area of Rajpur-Sonarpur municipality. Television footage showed him being escorted by security personnel wearing a police-issued cricket helmet, with his shirt torn and spectacles damaged.

Local residents, many of them women carrying broomsticks and bamboo poles, accused the TMC leadership of years of extortion, poor civic services and intimidation. Protesters shouted "thief, thief" and questioned Banerjee's absence during the RG Kar rape and murder case. Some cited remarks made during election campaigning as a reason for their anger.

Banerjee alleged that BJP activists orchestrated the attack and claimed there was no police presence at the scene. "They wanted to kill me," he said, adding that he would inform the Calcutta High Court and the Governor. BJP state president Samik Bhattacharya denied involvement, describing the incident as a reflection of public anger but "not expected in a democracy".

Meanwhile, the West Bengal CID served Banerjee a notice directing him to appear for questioning on Monday in connection with an investigation into alleged forged signatures on a letter backing senior TMC leader Shobhandeb Chattopadhyay as Leader of the Opposition.

The notice was personally delivered after CID officers spent nearly 90 minutes attempting to locate him at two residences in south Kolkata. Banerjee said he would consult lawyers and cooperate with the investigation but described the move as politically motivated.

The probe follows allegations that signatures of some newly elected TMC MLAs on a support letter submitted to the Assembly Secretariat did not match official records. —*PTI*

TMC's Abhishek Banerjee wears a helmet after stones, shoes and eggs were hurled at him in Sonarpur on Saturday—*PTI*

We want to bring Tatas back to Singur, says Bengal BJP President

KOLKATA, 30 MAY

Seeking to renew the industrial legacy of Singur, West Bengal BJP president Samik Bhattacharya said the state government wants the Tata Group to return to the Hooghly township, describing it as both an economic necessity and a powerful signal that the state is again open for business.

In an interview with PTI on the BJP government's industrial vision, he said bringing the Tatas back to Singur would help erase what he called the "wrong message" sent to investors after the Nano project was forced out of the state. The remarks come at a time when the new BJP government is preparing a fresh land policy that it believes will form the backbone of an industrialisation drive in a state that was once India's manufacturing powerhouse.

Referring to the controversy surrounding the Nano project's exit from Singur in 2008 following the anti-land acquisition movement spearheaded by Mamata Banerjee, Bhattacharya said the dismantling of the Tata Motors plant had become a defining image of Bengal's hostility towards industry. Asked whether a Tata return to Singur would amount to a "prayaschitta" (atonement) for the mistakes of the previous admin, he said the departure of Tata Motors had inflicted lasting damage on the state.

The choice of Singur is politically loaded. The movement against Tata Motors helped TMC chief Mamata to capture power and end the Left Front's 34-year rule, and it also came to symbolise Bengal's industrial retreat. — *PTI*

Many TMC MLAs want to join, but no entry now: BJP

KOLKATA, 30 MAY

Asserting that the door is now shut for several sitting TMC MPs and MLAs who are "keen to join the BJP" after its victory in West Bengal, state BJP president Samik Bhattacharya said in politics, "two plus two is not always four," keeping the possibility of future entry for taint-free leaders open.

He said after securing a decisive mandate on its own, the party was under no compulsion to induct rival leaders, and rejected any distinction between a "good TMC" and a "bad TMC."

He asserted that the party had learnt from its experience of large-scale defections ahead of the 2021 assembly polls. — *PTI*

Bengal to implement National Health Mission

Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari on Saturday said the state is set to implement the National Health Mission, and the Centre has sanctioned Rs 2,103 crore for the scheme. Addressing a programme of the health department in Kolkata, Adhikari also said that over 1.36 crore families will be covered under the Ayushman Bharat scheme in Bengal. "This will ensure that a large section of the population in the state receives quality healthcare support," he said. —*PTI*

'Annapurna Yojana' fund transfers from 3 June

West Bengal Chief Minister Adhikari on Saturday said the first phase of fund transfers under the 'Annapurna Yojana' would begin from 3 June, with eligible women receiving Rs 3,000 directly in their bank accounts.

He said officials would visit households to help women fill application forms to ensure that the assistance reaches only genuine cases. The 12-page application form, which requires women to provide info about every family member, had drawn criticism. —*PTI*

AIADMK whip seeks action against TVK

CHENNAI, 30 MAY

AIADMK whip Agri SS Krishnamoorthy met Tamil Nadu Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar at Lok the Bhavan here on Saturday and requested him to take action against the alleged "horse-trading" by the ruling TVK, after the resignation of four AIADMK MLAs.

AIADMK MLAs K Maragatham Kumaravel (Maduranthakam Assembly constituency), S Jayakumar (Perundurai), P Sathyabama (Dharapuram) and Esakki Subaya (Ambasamudram) had resigned and joined the TVK.

They were among the rebel AIADMK MLAs who voted for the TVK government in the Assembly during the floor test on 13 May.

In a petition submitted to the Governor, the AIADMK claimed that "huge sums of money were given to buy its MLAs" and sought a CBI enquiry, a party release said.

AIADMK Rajya Sabha member M Dhanapal accompanied Krishnamoorthy.

Later, speaking to reporters, Krishnamoorthy said that his party has demanded a CBI probe into the alleged "horse- trading" by the TVK. "We hope that the Governor will take action against our complaint," he added.

The AIADMK whip also expressed concerns about the Speaker's "fast" acceptance of resignation letters from the AIADMK MLAs. — *PTI*

AIADMK leaders MLA Agri Krishnamurthy and MP Dhanapal with Tamil Nadu Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar on Saturday—*PTI*

No proposal to declare cow national animal: Govt

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal has confirmed that there is currently no proposal before the Centre to declare the cow as the national animal or to impose a nationwide ban on cow slaughter. He explained that laws regarding cow slaughter differ across states, with decisions often based on local considerations.

In response to questions about demands for the cow's status as the national animal and a ban on slaughter, Meghwal told PTI, "Various organisations keep working on these issues and approach MPs. People submit applications and make representations saying such a measure should be taken." He added, "At present, there is no such matter under Cabinet consideration. If a proposal reaches a stage warranting a government decision, we will inform you."

He noted that different states, including BJP-led West Bengal, enforce their own cattle slaughter laws, and that demands for a complete ban persist and are widely discussed. Meghwal highlighted support from Hindu groups and Muslim organisations, such as Maulana Arshad Madani of Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind, who argue recognising the cow as the national animal could reduce tensions. —*PTI*

Evict me by force, says Rabri as govt gives her house to minister

PATNA, 30 MAY

Former Bihar Chief Minister Rabri Devi has openly challenged Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary to evict her "by force" from the government bungalow she has occupied for over a decade. The RJD leader, who served as CM from 1997 to 2005, reacted strongly when asked about an order from the building construction department that allocated the 10, Circular Road bungalow in Patna to Dairy and Fisheries Minister Nand Kishor Ram.

Rabri Devi, wife of RJD President Lalu Prasad, said, "Yes, I can see that Samrat Choudhary, who has become the chief minister only recently, is quite excited. Let him get me evicted by force. I am not going to vacate the premises." She made these remarks from inside her car after returning from a short vacation in Delhi, where she celebrated her grandson's birthday.

The bungalow, near Raj Bhavan and the CM's residence, was allotted to her by the previous Nitish Kumar government. Despite an order stating it should be allocated only to a deputy CM, she continued to occupy the house, sharing it with her husband, and her son Tejashwi Yadav, who also spends most of his time there.

Meanwhile, JD(U) leader Leshi Singh stated, "Rabri Devi was allotted 39, Hardinge Road, and cannot say she is being denied perks. We have allotted 10, Circular Road to a minister, and Rabri Devi can expect no leniency." —*PTI*

Rabri Devi, Samrat Choudhary —*PTI*

Indian democracy is for everyone including CJP, declares RSS

NAGPUR, 30 MAY

Indian democracy has the capacity to accommodate all voices and emotions, and "Gen Z" has faith in the country, a senior RSS leader said, reacting to the emergence of the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP).

India follows democratic processes, conducts transparent elections, and has an open media, including social media, said Sunil Ambekar, the Akhil Bhartiya Prachar Pramukh (all-India publicity chief) of the RSS. He was responding to a question about the CJP phenomenon

"Our democracy is strong. I believe it has the capacity to include everyone's voice and emotion, and people should trust that," he said. — PTI

Chennithala secures jobs for 43 SI candidates

T'PURAM, 30 MAY

Keralam Home Minister Ramesh Chennithala has stepped in to ensure the appointment of 43 candidates from the Sub-Inspector (SI) rank list, which is set to expire on 9 June.

He asked the Additional Chief Secretary (Home) to take urgent action to prevent these candidates from losing their opportunity due to the expiry of the rank list.

The PSC rank list was published on 9 June, 2025, and was scheduled to expire on 9 June, 2026. Although the government had extended some PSC list validity, this benefit did not apply to these candidates.

The candidates approached Chennithala, who urged officials to act swiftly to extent the list's validity. Chennnithala's intervention has now paved the way for the appointment of the 43 candidates as Sub-Inspectors. — PTI

Myanmar Prez starts five-day India visit

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

Myanmar President U Min Aung Hlaing commenced a five-day visit to India on Saturday, aimed at strengthening bilateral cooperation in trade, connectivity, border security, and defence. His trip began with a visit to the Mahabodhi temple in Bodh Gaya before arriving in Delhi, where he was welcomed by Bihar Governor Lt Gen Syed Ata Hasnain (Retd).

Aung Hlaing's visit, less than two months after his election following Myanmar's parliamentary polls, highlights India's strategic partnership with Myanmar, sharing a 1,640km border with northeastern states including Nagaland and Manipur. He is accompanied by a high-level delegation of ministers, officials, and business leaders. The visit, initially scheduled for the International Big Cat Alliance Summit on 1 June, has been deferred.

On 1 June, the president will meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi to discuss civilisational ties and participate in a business forum. He will also visit Mumbai on 2 June for further industry interactions. MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal stated that border security and connectivity issues will be discussed, with a focus on expanding defence and trade ties.

Jaiswal emphasised that Myanmar lies at the confluence of India's Neighbourhood First, Act East, and MAHASAGAR policies, aiming to deepen multifaceted relations. –*PTI*

'INDONESIA DEAL IN FINAL STAGES'

India finalises BrahMos deal with Vietnam

SINGAPORE, 30 MAY

Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh said on Saturday that he understood a BrahMos missile deal with Vietnam had been signed, although it has not been publicly announced, while a similar pact involving Indonesia was in the final stages.

"My understanding is that with both Indonesia and with Vietnam, the deal is in the final stages. In fact, for Vietnam, I understand that it has already been signed, probably not publicly announced, but it's already been signed," Singh said in Singapore, while answering a question on potential buyers of the missile system at the Shangri-La Dialogue.

The Philippines, which signed a contract worth nearly USD 375 million in 2022, was the first foreign buyer of the BrahMos from India.

Indonesia said in March that it had entered into an agreement with India to procure the BrahMos missile.

And, earlier this month, there were news reports that suggested Vietnam was close to signing a BrahMos missile deal with India. But Singh's comments on Saturday came as the first official word on this in the public domain.

However, the values of the Vietnam and Indonesia deals have not been officially disclosed yet. Referring to the issue of sharing defence technologies, Singh said countries generally sold sophisticated weapons to nations they regarded as partners. "Obviously you share technology with people you trust," he said.

He said that India has a strong commitment to the ASEAN, "and we treat all of you as friendly foreign countries with whom we can share advanced defence technologies." — PTI

Indonesia said in March that it had entered into an agreement with India to procure the BrahMos missile—*WIKIPEDIA*

- However, the values of the Vietnam and Indonesia deals have not been disclosed officially so far. Referring to the issue of sharing defence technologies, the Defence Secretary said countries generally sold sophisticated weapons to only nations they regarded as their reliable partners

CBSE site was hit by cyber attack: Govt

50 students gained access into CBSE portal leading to abnormal display of payable fees

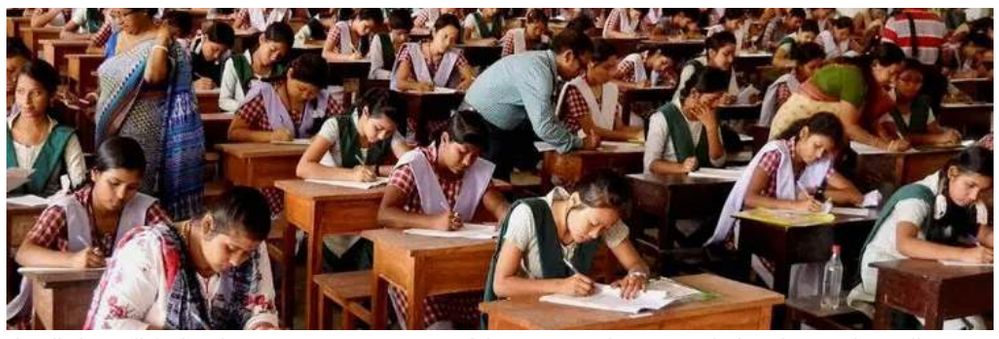
NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

The CBSE revaluation portal's payment system was hit by a "malicious attack," with around 50 students gaining unauthorised access, government sources said.

"There were some unauthorised attacks on the portal's payment gateway with HDFC and around 50 children got in," a source said.

Sources said the issue led to abnormal fee displays on the portal, where the payable amount in some cases fluctuated from around Re 1 to nearly Rs 67,000-Rs 68,000.

"I think out of fun or mala fide intention one rupee was shown and then Rs 67-68,000. There were around 50 children in whose cases the amount had changed," the source said.



The glitch was linked to the HDFC payment gateway of the CBSE portal. It occurred when the portal went live—*ANI*

The glitch was linked to the HDFC payment gateway integrated with the system and occurred when the portal went live.

Four PSU banks, SBI, Canara Bank, Indian Bank, and Bank of Maharashtra, have also been integrated as payment gateways.

Experts from IIT Madras and IIT Kanpur, along with the Digital Infrastructure Corporation of India, are examining the system and strengthening the portal and payment gateway integration, the source said.

On 24 May, Pradhan held discussions with Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman regarding the recent payment and technical issues faced by students during the CBSE post-result and revaluation processes.

During the discussion, it was decided that the four public sector banks mentioned above will assist the CBSE in strengthening its payment gateway and its integration with the post-exam portal.

"So, their payment gateway has been synced with that of the CBSE portal. I think we had a test run yesterday, and we thought that it was working well," the source said.

"Earlier, there were issues of space. So, we went to Amazon Web Services (AWS)," the source added. — *PTI*

—PTI

7 Dalits injured in TN gang attack

CHENNAI, 30 MAY

Seven Dalits were injured after they were allegedly attacked by a gang in Tenkasi district on Friday, police said on Saturday.

A nine-member masked gang came to Nettur village on two-wheelers on Friday and attacked the people with sickles.

The assailants fled immediately after the assault. A total of seven people were injured and admitted to the nearest government hospital.

A case has been registered, and investigation is on, police said. —*PTI*

HP to make dope tests mandatory for govt jobs

SHIMLA, 30 MAY

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu directed departments to make dope tests compulsory before government recruitment, officials announced. Sukhu prioritised protecting youth from drug abuse and asked for action against employees involved in trafficking heroin. Following directives on 11 May, 123 employees involved in drug activities face action, with 31 dismissed, including 21 police officers. The CM also asked for details of applicants seeking employment on compassionate grounds and ordered payment of pending gratuity and leave dues to pensioners. He instructed departments to compile data on fallen trees due to storms, with a campaign starting June 1 to clear them promptly. —*PTI*

Wild elephant kills man in Keralam

THRISSUR, 30 MAY

A 62-year-old man was killed in a wild elephant attack near Athirappally, Keralam, officials said. Forest Minister Shibu Baby John called it the third incident in a week, emphasising the need for a collective effort to resolve wildlife conflict. He said the government is formulating a long-term plan, including a fact-finding exercise on recent deaths. The latest attack occurred at around 2.45am when Mohanan and relatives tried to chase an elephant from their home; the animal retaliated, killing Mohanan. The elephant returned to the wild. Rs 14 lakh has been allocated for Mohanan's family. —*PTI*

—PTI

Manipur truckers protest truck driver's killing

IMPHAL, 30 MAY

Truck drivers held a demonstration and suspended transport of goods in Manipur's Imphal West district on Saturday, demanding action against those involved in the killing of a trucker a day ago. Police said protests at Keithelmanbi stopped the movement of trucks along National Highway 37, connecting Imphal with Jiribam, which would remain suspended till appropriate security measures were made. It may be recalled that a truck driver from West Bengal was killed, and a police constable was injured when suspected militants fired at a convoy of goods vehicles in Ukhrul district on Friday. —*PTI*

Armed forces ready for Op Sindoor 2.0: Army Chief

PUNE, 30 MAY

The armed forces are fully prepared for 'Operation Sindoor 2.0' if the need arises, Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi said on Saturday, asserting that the three services are enhancing their synergy for modern multi-domain warfare that extends beyond land, air and sea.

Speaking at a press conference during the passing-out parade of the 150th course of the National Defence Academy (NDA) here, General Dwivedi said that while a temporary cessation of hostilities currently exists, all three services are preparing intensely for the next phase.

He said that future wars will not be limited to land, maritime and air alone, but would be increasingly influenced by domains like space, cyber and cognitive warfare.

Referring to information warfare lessons from Operation Sindoor, General Dwivedi said public trust and national cohesion would remain decisive factors in future conflicts.

Chief of the Staff (COAS) General Upendra Dwivedi addresses the media during the passing-out parade of the 150th course of the National Defence Academy (NDA) at Pune in Maharashtra —*ANI*

He said that Operation Sindoor demonstrated India's resolve and the armed forces' ability to deliver a calibrated, precise response.

He said the Indian Army is fully conscious of modernisation. The raising of drone battalions, Divyastra batteries, Shaktiman regiments, Bhairav battalions and other technology-enabled structures is part of this, he said

The general said the next step is networking and data-centricity, where data becomes a strategic resource, and decision-making becomes faster. On the use of drones and other indigenous weapons, General Dwivedi said since he has taken over, he has been talking about "Eagle on the Arm."

"This means every soldier should have the capability to fly a drone. Training for this is going on," he said. — *PTI*

CDS Gen Chauhan ends 'very satisfying' tenure

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

- Gen Chauhan took charge as the CDS in September 2022, nine months after the first CDS General Bipin Rawat died in a copter crash in Tamil Nadu

Outgoing Chief of Defence Staff Gen Anil Chauhan described his tenure as "very satisfying" as he wrapped up a three-year-and-eight-month stint at the top military post, during which he focused on bringing synergy among the three services.

Lt Gen NS Raja Subramani (retd) will take charge as India's next Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) on Sunday.

Gen Chauhan, a former Eastern Army Commander, took charge as the country's senior-most military commander in September 2022, over nine months after the first CDS General Bipin Rawat died in a helicopter crash in Tamil Nadu.

As Chief of Defence Staff, Gen Chauhan played a key role in planning and executing Operation Sindoor.

During his tenure, he focused on ensuring tri-services synergy to enhance India's military prowess.

The Chief of Defence Staff also initiated a number of measures towards India's plan to roll out the theaterisation model by creating integrated military commands.

Gen Chauhan's tenure was to end on 30 September 2025, but he was given an extension.

He had retired from service in May 2021 as Lieutenant General, but assumed the rank of a four-star General after taking charge as India's second CDS.

Gen Chauhan was DGMO when Indian jets pounded a Jaish-e-Mohammad terrorist training camp in Balakot in February 2019. He provided key inputs for the operation. — *PTI*

The site after an under-construction bridge collapsed following a storm over the Betwa river in the Hamirpur district of Uttar Pradesh—*PTI*

UP bridge collapse: Firm, contractor booked

HAMIRPUR, 30 MAY

Police registered a case against the executing agency and contractor of the Betwa river bridge in Hamirpur, where a concrete slab collapsed killing six labourers, officials said on Saturday.

They have been accused of negligence and laxity in the execution of government projects, police said.

The case was lodged on Friday night at the Kurara police station as per a complaint filed by the State Bridge Corporation Deputy Project Manager Dilip Kumar against the executing agency's owner Pawan Pratap Singh and contractor Nitish Kumar.

One Assistant Engineer has already been suspended in connection with the incident for negligence.

Police said the incident occurred around 3 am on the 28 May night when a slab of the under construction bridge between Parsani and Kandaur villages collapsed amid a severe storm.

The bridge is being constructed over the Betwa River about 25 km from Hamirpur town. — *PTI*

FDA traces methanol used in spurious liquor to Bhiwandi warehouse

THANE, 30 MAY

The Maharashtra FDA has seized 5,929 kg of toxic methanol from a warehouse in Thane district which allegedly supplied the chemical to bootleggers who made the spurious liquor that claimed 14 lives in Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad, officials said on Saturday.

A FDA team raided the premises of Rex International in Bhiwandi on Friday and sealed it.

Police said 10 persons died in the Phugewadi area of Pimpri Chinchwad, and four others from the Pandhare Mala area in Pune's Hadapsar died after consuming suspected spurious liquor over two days.

The FDA said the country liquor — sold for a mere Rs 30 — had been spiked with industrial methanol sourced from Rex International. Police traced the methanol component directly to the stocks of Rex International, which has a warehouse in Bhiwandi, the release said. The FDA team has d seized the entire undocumented stock of 5,929 kg of methanol, it stated.

The owners of the firm, Arun Choubey and Abhishek Choubey, have been taken arrested. — *PTI*

Families mourn those who died after consuming spurious liquor in Pune district. (Inset) Yogesh Wankhade who was arrested for bootlegging —*PTI*

SWIRLIING DUST

A huge dust storm engulfs the skyline of Dungargarh in the Bikaner district of Rajasthan on Saturday. Dust storms hit Delhi too on Saturday —*PTI*

TN to continue free bus rides for students

CHENNAI, 30 MAY

The Tamil Nadu government said that it will continue to implement the free bus pass scheme for school and college students in the state.

Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay had informed the assembly that his government will continue to implement existing welfare schemes, launched by previous admins.

State Transport Minister A Vijay Tamilan Parthiban said schools across Tamil Nadu will reopen on 4 June and subsequently government arts and science colleges, government dental colleges, and government Industrial Training Institutes are also scheduled to reopen.

Noting that for the academic year 2026–27, free bus passes for students will be issued at their educational institutions, the Minister said, "arrangements are being made through the TN State Transport Corporations."

Taking into account the time required for issuing free bus passes, students are permitted to travel to and from their schools without payment, provided they wear their uniforms, he added.

Similarly, students of government colleges are allowed to travel free of charge by producing their identity cards.

QUARRIES CLOSED

The TN Minister for Natural Resources, TK Prabu, said 60 quarries which were found operating violating state regulations have been temporarily closed. — *PTI*

DEFAMATION

HC denies bail to academician Madhu Kishwar in re-tweet case

CHANDIGARH, 30 MAY

The Punjab and Haryana High Court has dismissed the anticipatory bail plea of academician Madhu Purnima Kishwar in a case registered against her for allegedly re-tweeting a video clip on social media.

Justice Aman Chaudhary observed on Friday that there was a distinction between "constructive criticism and tweeting/trolling" and said that since Kishwar had a large following on social media, the repercussions could be huge.

The court observed this was not a "solitary incident" and that Kishwar had been posting on "sensitive" matters.

The high court noted that the investigation is at a nascent stage and dismissed Kishwar's plea seeking pre-arrest bail.

Kishwar had been booked for defamation by the Chandigarh Police following a complaint.

Kishwar, through her counsels Kapil Sibal and Sartaj Singh Narula, contended that the only allegation against her was that she had re-tweeted a 14-second video clip on X, which was without any ill-intent. The offence of forgery has not been made out against her, as she is not the one who had prepared the video. She has no control over the comments others make on what she uploads/posts, thus cannot be held responsible for acts of others, the counsels submitted.

The counsel appearing for Chandigarh contended that it would be wrong to say it was a mere re-tweet by Kishwar.

The video in question was first uploaded by another person on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. Then Kishwar downloaded the video and uploaded it on her X handle, where she has a huge following of 18 lakh persons. — *PTI*

Delhi court charges Jacqueline, Sukesh, 15 others in PMLA case

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

A Delhi court on Saturday ordered framing of charges against actor Jacqueline Fernandez, alleged conman Sukesh Chandrashekar and 15 others in a Rs 200-crore money laundering case.

Additional Sessions Judge (ASJ) Prashant Sharma said that "prima facie, there is sufficient material on record based upon which a strong suspicion is raised against all accused."

Chandrashekhar was arrested by the Delhi Police in 2017 and by the Enforcement Directorate in 2021.

The prosecution said Sukash Chandrashekhar was running an organised criminal network from inside the jail and was impersonating senior government officials, including officers from the PMO, Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Law and Justice.

Besides Sukesh Chandrasekhar alias Sukash Chandrashekhar, the accused included his wife Leena Maria Paul alias Leena Paulose, Jacqueline Fernandez, Deepak Ramnani, Pradeep Ramdanee, B Mohanraj, Arun Muthu, D Kamlesh Kothari and Pinky Irani.

The other accused are Pooja Singh, Dharam Singh Meena, Mahender Prasad Sundriyal, Sunder Bora, Komal Poddar, Jitender Narula, Avinash Kumar and Jai Prakash Singhal.

It is alleged that by using spoofed calls, encrypted applications and fabricated identities, complainant Aditi Singh and her family were induced to part with huge sums of money.

The prosecution alleged that the accused generated proceeds of crime amounting to around Rs 200 crore through extortion, cheating, impersonation and criminal intimidation and thereafter concealed, possessed, transferred, layered and projected the same as untainted, legally acquired property with the help of associates. — *PTI*

WORLD TOBACCO DAY

Workers roll bidis, traditional hand-rolled tobacco cigarettes wrapped in tendu leaves, ahead of World No Tobacco Day in Agartala, Tripura, on Saturday. Observed annually on 31 May, World No Tobacco Day was established by the World Health Organisation to highlight the health risks of tobacco use and promote measures to curb consumption. Tobacco use causes an estimated 1.35 million deaths annually in India, accounting for nearly 11.7 per cent of deaths nationwide —PTI

ANIMAL SLAUGHTER

WB leather industry to face shortages amid new norms

West Bengal has enforced strict regulations on cattle (cows, bulls, bullocks, calves, and buffaloes) slaughter. Cattle cannot be slaughtered without a certificate declaring the animal 'fit for slaughter' —PTI

The leather industry in West Bengal is apprehensive of a raw material shortage as strict enforcement of animal slaughter regulations by the state government is set to disrupt supplies of cow and buffalo hides, traders said.

The impact is likely to be visible after Eid al-Adha, traditionally a peak season for hide availability, as Muslim clerics claimed that cow sacrifice during the Eid celebrations in the state on Thursday dropped to "negligible levels" under the stringent regulations, which the community chose to abide by.

Indian Leather Products Association (ILPA) president Md Azhar said that the raw material shortage could worsen the situation for the industry, an already stressed sector facing weak global demand and logistical disruptions.

"This is not only about Bakri Eid. The concern is over stricter regulations on cattle slaughtering and sale and purchase of cows and buffaloes, which will impact overall hide availability," Azhar said.

Traditionally, after Eid al-Adha, hides are available in abundance because a large number of cows and buffaloes are slaughtered during the occasion, he said, adding that such supplies support the tanning industry for months.

Under the stricter regulatory regime and enforcement of the West Bengal Animal Slaughter Control Act 1950, the authorities have intensified checks on cattle transportation, documentation and slaughter practices, while the sale and purchase of cows and buffaloes are being closely monitored, industry sources said.

Cow and buffalo hides are extensively used by Kolkata's leather industry, which processes millions of square feet of leather annually and manufactures a wide range of export-oriented leather goods.

Cow hides are generally preferred for premium leather products such as garments, wallets and handbags because of their finer texture, while buffalo hides are mainly used for durable footwear, industrial leather and saddlery items.

The West Bengal leather industry is estimated to have an annual turnover of Rs 23,000 - Rs 25,000 crore, including exports worth around Rs 10,000 crore, according to the stakeholders.

"Prices of hides will increase, aggravating problems when the sector is already reeling under margin pressure and lower exports due to the US tariff imposition, the Iran conflict and the Strait of Hormuz-related shipping disruptions," Azhar said.

The Hormuz crisis is leading to lower container availability, he said, adding that demand is "weak and the biggest concern now is protecting workers' livelihoods".

According to Azhar, around 6-7 lakh workers are directly or indirectly dependent on the leather industry in and around Kolkata.

India imports nearly 50 per cent of its hide requirement, and any decline in supply from West Bengal — one of the country's major leather hubs — would further increase dependence on overseas raw material shipment, he said.

Leather Exports Council Chairman Ramesh Kumar Juneja acknowledged that the availability of leather raw material in the state would decline due to the cattle slaughter regulations, but said the industry will have to obey the law of the land.

"There will be some reduction in local availability of hides, but the situation can be managed through imports. Industry already imports about 50 per cent of its requirements, as domestic supply is not adequate. Imports will increase, but there will be no crisis for production," Juneja told PTI.

He said hides could be sourced from countries such as New Zealand, Australia and parts of the Middle East.

"There is also no issue with shipments from New Zealand and Australia as those routes do not involve the troubled Strait of Hormuz," Juneja added.

Kolkata's leather cluster, centred around the Bantala Leather Complex, is among the country's major processing hubs and exports leather garments, bags, wallets, footwear and saddlery products.

However, the leather sector in West Bengal has already been facing multiple headwinds, including slowing global demand, rising compliance costs and geopolitical uncertainties impacting freight movement and export orders, industry stakeholders said. Exports from the sector have declined in recent months due to these geopolitical headwinds. —PTI

SALAR سالار

The war in Gaza is driving a rise in early marriage

Israel's military campaign and the mass displacement in Gaza have fuelled an increase in early marriage, according to official data and experts. Desperate parents are marrying off daughters as young as 13, hoping to give them protection and financial support.

Official data show a rise in early marriage, which had been declining before Hamas' 7 October, 2023 attack led to a war now paused by a fragile ceasefire.

The Associated Press spoke to six girls in Gaza who got married between 13 and 16, as well as to their parents. Two of the girls said they were repeatedly raped and described horrific physical abuse. Four of the girls had given birth and described dangerous pregnancies. Three had at least one miscarriage.

All of the parents who spoke to the AP said that if not for the war, they would have never resorted to marrying off their daughters so young.

Here are the main takeaways from the report.

A DESPERATE DECISION LED TO HORRIFIC ABUSE

The AP spoke to one mother, Majda, who was living in a ragged tent after her husband and eldest son were killed in Israeli airstrikes. Destitute and paralysed by grief, Majda married her daughters off at the ages of 13 and 14 to two brothers in their 20s.

"I thought I was protecting them," she said.

The two girls said their husbands raped them and their in-laws beat them. The younger sister said she had two miscarriages, both after her husband kicked her when she was pregnant.

Majda's elder daughter gave birth to a son. Months later, she fled, carrying the baby 15 kilometres to her mother's tent. Not long after that, the younger sister also fled back to Majda. She was pregnant.

Majda came under heavy pressure from her father and her in-laws, who said she couldn't afford to care for her daughters, the grandson and the new baby on the way.

Feeling she had no choice, she relented. The girls returned to their husbands in early May. Majda hasn't been able to contact her daughters since then.

"They did not want to return," she said. "They were crying."

Marriage is seen as a way to ease the family burden

The law in Gaza allows exceptions to the minimum age of 17 with parental consent and authorisation by a judge. Court officials have been told not to approve exceptions below the age of 14 years and seven months, but some parents enter informal agreements that circumvent the rules.

The United Nations and most humanitarian groups categorise marriages of girls under 18 as early marriage.Most of the girls who spoke to the AP said they were not coerced by their parents to marry. But they felt a duty to ease the burden on their families.

By marrying, they were counted with their husbands as a separate family to receive aid from relief groups, rather than being under their parents' allotment. Several girls also said that since schools largely shut down during the war, they saw no hope of continuing their education.

"Marriage felt like the only sense of normalcy I could restore to my life," said a girl who agreed to be married at 17. Younger girls who marry are more vulnerable to rape and violence, including abuse from in-laws, said Amal Siyam, director of the Women's Affairs Centre in Gaza. Since divorce rates in early marriages are high, "the girl ends up returning home with one or two children," she said.

EARLY MARRIAGE WAS DECLINING BEFORE THE WAR

Before the war, child marriage had been slowly declining in Gaza, according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. In 2022, the last tally released by the bureau, 17.8 per cent of all the marriages involved a girl under the age of 18, down from more than 22 per cent in 2015.

That trend appears to have reversed. After an AP request, the Supreme Shariah Court in Gaza, where marriages are registered, gathered data from court employees. According to its figures, 20.6 per cent of the 35,474 marriages recorded in 2024 and 2025 involved a girl under 18, including 627 marriages of girls under 15. The real rate is likely much higher because many marriages have gone unregistered during the chaos of the war, Siyam said. —*Agencies*

Women and children await to receive donated food at a distribution center in Khan Younis, Gaza Strip —PTI

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Bashir Badr, the people's poet, leaves a void in the hearts of millions

Bashir Badr, one of Urdu poetry's most relevant voices whose words reflected the complexity of life and politics, leaves behind a legacy that travelled far beyond literary circles and found their way into everyday conversations, political speeches and popular culture.

Badr, who died at his Bhopal home at the age of 91, had stepped away from the limelight several years ago following the onset of dementia. His passing has left a void in Urdu poetry that will be hard to fill.

Born on 15 February, 1935, in Faizabad (now Ayodhya), he was just seven when he started writing poetry. He received his education, from graduation till PhD, from Aligarh Muslim University.

One of his most cited couplets -- "Ujale apni yaadon ke hamare saath rehne do, Na jaane kis gali mein zindagi ki shaam ho jaye... (Let the light of your memories remain with me /Who knows in which alley the evening of life may descend)"-- was penned when he was a teen.

Known for the use of highly contemporary Urdu in his ghazals, Badr brought conversational simplicity and emotional range to poetry that painted love, loneliness, separation, and human relationships in a language that was both accessible and familiar all the way from political corridors to college canteens.

From reels to social media posts and from old fashioned letters to movies, the words went out. Writer and lyricist Varun Grover used Badr's couplet in the much appreciated 2015 film Masaan. Another Badr admirer is filmmaker Vishal Bhardwaj who used Badr extensively in Dedh Ishqiya.

In many videos, still surviving on internet, Badr can be seen reciting his lines with great flourish. He was, for his friends, the soul of mushairas.

In 2018, Badr' words echoed in the Lok Sabha.

Congress leader Mallikarjun Kharge quoted the Urdu poet and said, "Dushmani jamkar karo lekin ye gunjaish rahe, jab kabhi hum dost ho jaayen toh sharminda naa ho. (Be enemies with all your might, but leave this possibility alive /That if we ever become friends again, neither of us feels ashamed)." It's a couplet Badr is believed to have written after the Shimla Agreement in 1972.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi also quoted Badr in his reply. "Jee bahut chahta hai sach bolein, kya karein haunsla nahi hota (My heart deeply longs to speak the truth/But what can I do, I do not have the courage)."

Born on 15 February, 1935, in Faizabad (now Ayodhya), Bashir Badr was just seven when he started writing poetry. He received his education, from graduation till PhD, from Aligarh Muslim University —SCREENGRAB

In April 1987, Badr, who was then head of the Urdu department at Meerut College, lost all his belongings, unpublished manuscripts and a library in the flames of a communal riot. Heartbroken, he left the city to settle in Bhopal where he lived till his last breath. The pain of losing a home remained with him and spilled on to the paper when he wrote: "Log toot jaate hain ghar banane mein/Tum taras nahin khaate bastiyaan jalaane mein (People break themselves trying to build a home; you feel no pity in burning whole villages down)."

According to the Rekhta Foundation, Badr was well-versed in Persian, Hindi and English and had over 18,000 couplets to his credit and a large number of Urdu ghazals too.

He had more than seven collections of poems in Urdu and one in Hindi, apart from two books as a literary critic.

Renowned poet Waseem Barelvi mourned the death of a close friend and a "great man".

"It is the end of an era. We participated in kavi sammelans and mushairas together hundreds of times," Barelvi told PTI.

Hindi poet Laxmi Shankar Bajpai credited Badr for popularising Urdu poetry and "writing it in a language that helped Hindi ghazal to flourish".

"The entirely new idiom, new imagery, new metaphors, and new themes that transformed the Urdu ghazal so fundamentally. Bashir Badr sahab played a hugely significant role in that change," Bajpai said.

Badr received the Padma Shri award in 1999 for contribution towards literature and Sangeet Natak Akademi. He also received the Sahitya Akademi Award in Urdu for his poetry collection Aas in 1999. —*PTI*

WHEN BADR FAILED HIS OWN EXAM

The legendary Urdu poet Bashir Badr, 91, died in Bhopal on 28 May, leaving behind a large body of work and many memories. Badr's son Tayeb Badr remembered his father recalling that an examiner, during Badr's time at Aligarh Muslim University, asked him to explain the deeper meaning behind a couplet - "Ab hum milenge toh kayi log bichad jayenge, Intezar aur karo mera agle janam ka (If we meet now, many will be torn apart/ Wait a little longer, wait for me until our next birth)." The lines had been written by Badr himself, which he did not reveal to the examiner. "(To) his utter surprise, the examiner completely disagreed with his explanation," Tayeb said. Badr failed the exam, but succeeded in becoming one of the most influential and oft quoted Urdu poets in contemporary India. —PTI

— MAGNIFIC

US and China trade journalist expulsions

WASHINGTON, 30 MAY

The Trump administration has revoked the visa of a Chinese national working for Xinhua, apparently in retaliation for Beijing's expulsion of a New York Times journalist. A person familiar with the matter confirmed the visa revocation, speaking anonymously due to visa privacy. The State Department official also confirmed plans to revoke the visa. Beijing expelled Vivian Wang, a China correspondent for The New York Times, over her presence at a DealBook event featuring Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te, which Sorkin called a country. The Times called for Wang's reinstatement. US media presence in China is already low, with staff reductions following previous disputes over credentials and coverage of Taiwan and China relations. *—PTI*

Ukraine strikes another Russian oil refinery

KYIV, 30 MAY

Ukrainian drone strikes triggered fires at oil facilities in Russia's Rostov and Krasnodar regions overnight, as Kyiv continued targeting infrastructure that helps fund Moscow's war effort. Russian officials said falling drone debris damaged an oil depot and tanker in Taganrog and sparked a fire at an oil depot in Armavir. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the Armavir facility, about 500 km from Ukraine's border, had been successfully targeted. Meanwhile, Kyiv is preparing for further Russian attacks after Moscow warned of "systemic strikes" on the Ukrainian capital. The attacks came a day after a Russian drone reportedly struck an apartment building in Romania, injuring two people and raising concerns about conflict spillover. *—PTI*

Rescuers free 4 men trapped in flooded Laos cave

BANGKOK, 30 MAY

Rescue teams in Laos have evacuated four villagers trapped in a flooded cave for ten days, with two others still missing. The villagers entered the cave last week seeking minerals but were trapped by flash flooding. One escaped early and alerted authorities, while five were found alive on Wednesday, identified as Khamla, Mued, Ee, Ing, and Laen. The first man was rescued on Friday after a 30-minute operation, wearing an oxygen mask and foil blanket. Rescuers used divers to deliver supplies. The teams include specialists from Laos, Thailand, Japan, Malaysia, Indonesia, France, and Australia, some of whom participated in Thailand's 2018 cave rescue. *—PTI*

US, Cuba military officials meet near Guantanamo Bay

WASHINGTON, 30 MAY

US Southern Command chief General Francis Donovan met Cuban military leaders near the US naval base at Guantanamo Bay Naval Base on Friday for what officials described as a brief discussion on operational security matters. The meeting comes as President Donald Trump increases pressure on Cuba, including an oil blockade, the deployment of warships in the Caribbean and legal action against former Cuban president Raul Castro. Donovan met Lieutenant General Roberto Legrá Sotolongo and other Cuban officers. Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces said both sides viewed the talks positively and agreed to maintain communication. Senior US officials, including Secretary of State Marco Rubio and CIA Director John Ratcliffe, have also recently spoke with Cuban officials. *—PTI*

No deal announced after WH situation room meet

Pezeshkian calls for dignified end to war amid impasse

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian; US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and President Donald Trump *—PRESSTV/PTI*

WASHINGTON, 30 MAY

US President Donald Trump held a White House Situation Room meeting with his advisers on Friday but has not yet made a decision on whether to move forward with a deal to extend the Iran ceasefire and reopen the Strait of Hormuz. Iran said the agreement has not been finalised.

Ahead of the meeting, Trump said he was looking to make a "final determination". A senior administration official later said the roughly two-hour meeting with national security aides had concluded without a decision.

"Trump will only make a deal that is good for America and satisfies his red lines. Iran can never possess a nuclear weapon," the official said.

The talks came after reports that US and Iranian negotiators had come to terms on a tentative agreement. The deal would extend the fragile ceasefire by 60 days as new talks are held on Iran's disputed nuclear programme. Under the deal, the Strait would also be gradually reopened and Iran would not be able to impose tolls on ships traversing it, which Iran's Persian Gulf Strait Authority (PGSA) rejected. Tehran would have to remove all mines from the vital waterway within 30 days.

Officials, such as US Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio, had suggested that a deal was approaching but was awaiting Trump's nod.

Ahead of the meet, Trump had announced that he would be ending the US blockade of the Strait, but again stressed the nuclear issue.

In response to the reports, Mohsen Rezae, a senior advisor to Iran's Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei, said that Trump "betrayed" diplomacy for the "third time".

Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Esmail Baghaei had earlier told state television that, "Tehran has said goodbye to the language of 'must' 47 years ago. None of the Western parties can use the language of 'must' when they talk about the Islamic Republic of Iran. We make our own decisions based on the interests and rights of the Iranian nation."

He added that nuclear issues were not being discussed.

However, Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian said that Iran was ready for a "dignified framework" to end the war.

Speaking to Emir of Qatar, Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Pezeshkian said that "Now is the time for the other side to demonstrate its will and, in both action and word, adhere to its international obligations". *—Agencies*

Israel takes over castle in Lebanon

ADLOUN, 30 MAY

Israel's air force and artillery struck areas close to a strategic mountain housing a Crusader-built castle in southern Lebanon on Saturday as fighting raged in villages close to the southern city of Nabatieh.

Lebanon's state-run National News Agency reported Israeli airstrikes and artillery shelling near the Crusader-built Beaufort castle that is about 15km from the Israeli border and overlooks wide parts of southern Lebanon. The strategic castle was held by Israeli troops for 18 years until they withdrew from Lebanon in May 2000.

NNA reported airstrikes on different parts of southern Lebanon including in the village of Ansar that killed three people. A drone strike on a road linking the village of Ebba with Nabatieh wounded two Lebanese soldiers, the army said in a statement.

Israel's military also issued evacuation warnings for more than a dozen villages in southern Lebanon, a day after Lebanese and Israeli military officials held their first direct talks in decades at the Pentagon. Israeli troops have crossed the Litani River, which the IDF has used as a de facto boundary. *—PTI*

India an anchor, Pak a true friend: Hegseth in Singapore

SINGAPORE, 30 MAY

US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth assured Pacific allies on Saturday that Washington remained committed to the region, but toned-down previous comments calling China a threat.

Speaking at the Shangri-La defence conference in Singapore, Hegseth said that the region "has profound implications for US security and prosperity", while praising both India and Pakistan in different ways.

He noted that India was rapidly modernising its weapons, but was a "critical anchor" holding regional peace.

"A powerful India acting in its own self-interest advances our shared goal of maintaining a balance of power across the region," he said.

"India is modernising its military to carry its share of the security burden, particularly in the Indian Ocean," Hegseth added. "[India is] building out the heavy industrial and logistics capacity to sustain high-end military operations, including the ability to repair and maintain our shared platforms and support US Navy vessels operating forward in the theatre."

"I mentioned India here, but I very easily could have mentioned Pakistan and the role that the Field Marshal and the Prime Minister are playing in peace negotiations (with Iran)," the former Fox News presenter said. "I think an unexpected development and a true friendship developing there."

He warned that both sides could produce an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) arms raise, but that the US didn't believe either India or Pakistan was a threat to the US.

CHINA-TAIWAN

While noting the threat of China's military build-up in the region, Hegseth also said the US wanted to avoid "needless confrontation".

"There is rightful alarm regarding China's historic military buildup and the expansion of its military activities in the region and beyond," he said, shortly after he visited Beijing when US President Donald Trump met Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Hegseth said that there was "no change in our status" towards the self-governing Taiwan, but would not comment on the proposed $14 billion arms deal.

However, he warned that any "hegemony", like China, could destabilise the region.

'INCREASE YOUR SPENDING'

Hegseth said the "era of US subsidising wealthy nations is over" and that Washington sought "partners, not protectorates."

"When our interests diverge, we adjust pragmatically, without the drama or the moralising," he added. "Western Europe might take note."

'CAN RESUME STRIKES ON IRAN'

Hegseth added that Washington was "capable" to recommence strikes on Iran if a deal was not reached. Reports have suggested that the US had burned through much of its munition stockpiles already, and hence was pausing arm sales to countries like Ukraine and China.

However, Hegseth projected strength, claiming "Our stockpiles are more than suited for that, both there and around the globe, so we're in a very good place". *—Agencies*

22 Afghan refugees returning from Pak killed in crash

The driver fell asleep on the road between Jalalabad in Afghanistan's east and Kabul *—SCREENGRAB*

KABUL, 30 MAY

A truck carrying Afghan refugees returning from neighbouring Pakistan overturned on a highway in eastern Afghanistan on Saturday, killing at least 22 people and injuring about 36 others, most of them women and children, officials said.

The accident occurred in Laghman province on the main highway linking Kabul with Nangarhar province, said Abdul Malik Niazai, the spokesperson for the provincial governor.

He said among the dead were 10 children and five women. The injured were taken to hospitals in Nangarhar.

The provincial Director of Public Health Aminullah Sharif, said the drive fell asleep at the wheel, causing the vehicle to fall into a ditch.

The passengers were among thousands of Afghans who recently returned from Pakistan, which launched a crackdown on migrants in 2023, and has since deported or pressured many to leave. Iran also intensified expulsions of Afghan migrants around the same time.

Since then, millions of Afghans have returned home from the two countries, including many who were born in Pakistan and had spent decades living and working there. *—PTI*

White House launches 'alien'-themed immigration website

WASHINGTON, 30 MAY

The White House has launched a new space-themed website highlighting immigration enforcement, using imagery and language associated with extra-terrestrials to focus on people living in the United States without legal authorisation.

Unveiled on Thursday, the site opens with scrolling text against a star-filled backdrop declaring: "They walk among us." It describes undocumented immigrants as "aliens" who live alongside Americans but "do not belong here".

The platform features a live counter of immigration-related "encounters", which stood at about 3.1 million on Thursday evening.

The website was stylised like a 'Star Wars' movie *—x*

The website also promotes President Donald Trump's immigration policies, stating that he was "the first to call out the real danger Aliens pose" to the nation.

A searchable US heat map displays arrest data from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), including detainees' countries of origin and alleged criminal or gang affiliations. The site also links to an ICE reporting form, encouraging the public to report "suspicious aliens".

The launch follows speculation after the White House registered the domains Alien.gov and Aliens.gov earlier this year.

It comes amid intensified immigration enforcement efforts and large-scale deportation plans, which have drawn criticism from advocacy groups and lawmakers. *—ANI*

TRUMP'S NAME ILLEGALLY ADDED TO KENNEDY CENTRE: JUDGE

A federal judge ruled on Friday that President Donald Trump's name was illegally added to the Kennedy Centre and blocked the administration from closing the cultural and arts venue for major renovations. Trump said in response that he is backing away from his proposed renovation and returning control of the arts institution to Congress. The administration had announced the work would begin in July and last approximately two years, but the ruling halts those plans for now.

Trump in perfect health, fit to serve: WH doc

Trump has been seen with bruises on his hand *—x*

WASHINGTON, 30 MAY

Donald Trump's physician said the US President is in "excellent health" and "fully fit" to serve after a medical examination at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. A report from Dr. Sean Barbabella, released on Friday, details a three-hour check-up including CT scans, heart imaging, cancer screenings, and assessments by 22 specialists.

Trump, 79, said everything checked out "perfectly" after the exam. He weighs 108kg, up 6kg from April 2025, with doctors advising diet and activity changes. His doctors confirmed his "cognitive and physical performance are excellent." With a height of 6 feet 3 inches (1.9 meters), his BMI is 29.7, just below obesity.

The report noted bruising on his hands, explained as "minor soft tissue irritation related to frequent handshaking," and recommended switching to low-dose aspirin. The exam also recorded "slight lower leg swelling," but noted "improvement from last year."

Trump scored 30/30 on cognitive tests and showed improved cholesterol levels, taking rosuvastatin and ezetimibe. His overall health remains strong, supporting his demanding schedule. *—PTI*

OSCAR WINNER

'Star Wars' editor Marcia Lucas no more

LOS ANGELES, 30 MAY

Marcia Lucas, the Oscar-winning editor whose work helped shape the original 'Star Wars' and define Hollywood's New Hollywood era, has died aged 80.

Lucas died on Wednesday in Rancho Mirage, California, from metastatic cancer, surrounded by family, according to attorney Deidre Von Rock.

Best known for editing the 1977 blockbuster 'Star Wars', Lucas won an Academy Award for her work on the film and was widely regarded as an unsung force behind its success. Married to creator George Lucas from 1969 to 1983, she played a key role in shaping the film's story, famously persuading him to kill off Obi-Wan Kenobi so the character could return as a spiritual guide to Luke Skywalker.

She also helped craft the film's climactic Death Star battle, piecing together thousands of feet of complex footage. George Lucas later credited her with making sense of an unprecedented editing challenge.

Marcia Lucas *—WIKIPEDIA*

4 OCT, 1945- 30 MAY, 2026

Beyond 'Star Wars', Lucas edited 'Return of the Jedi' (1983), George Lucas's earlier films 'THX 1138' and 'American Graffiti', and worked on Martin Scorsese classics including 'Taxi Driver', 'Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore' and 'New York, New York'.

She was among a pioneering group of female editors, whose work was instrumental to the male-dominated New Hollywood movement.

Born Marcia Griffin in Modesto, California, she began her career as a film librarian before moving into editing.

She is survived by her daughters, Amanda Lucas and Amy Soper, and three grandchildren. *—PTI*

WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus with DRC Prime Minister Judith Suminwa Tuluka *—X @DRTEDROS*

WHO Chief lands in Congo amid Ebola outbreak

BUNIA, 30 MAY

World Health Organisation (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus arrived on Saturday in eastern Congo's Bunia, a city at the heart of an outbreak of the rare Bundibugyo strain of Ebola, where the virus still spreads faster than the response.

Tedros is expected to visit a treatment centre and meet local authorities, health workers and affected families in Bunia.

"The best way to address this is to provide all the necessary support to fight the disease at its epicentre and to continue offering every assistance needed," Tedros told reporters late on Friday.

The WHO said Friday authorities have reported 906 suspected cases and 223 suspected deaths. Neighbouring Uganda has confirmed nine cases and one death, the Ugandan ministry of health said Friday.

The Bundibugyo virus has no approved treatment or vaccine.

"This is a difficult situation. But the Democratic Republic of Congo has faced the Ebola virus many times before. We are confident that it can once again," Tedros added after meeting with Congo's Prime Minister Judith Suminwa Tuluka. *—PTI*

— ZARA

Zara India's FY26 profit down 32% to Rs 204 cr

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

Zara's India profit decreased 31.9 per cent to Rs 204.14 crore in FY26, with revenue slipping 1.1 per cent to Rs 2,749.28 crore, according to Trent Ltd's annual report. In FY25, Zara reported Rs 299.84 crore profit and Rs 2,782.06 crore revenue. Its total income was Rs 2,767.75 crore, down from Rs 2,839.50 crore. The JV between Spain's Inditex and Tata's Trent Ltd operates 22 stores in India. During FY26, Trent reduced its stake in ITRIPL via a buyback, tendering 94,900 shares, leaving its holdings at 20 per cent. Inditex also owns Massimo Dutti, which showed a 27.97 per cent revenue increase to Rs 128.45 crore and a 13.86 per cent profit rise to Rs 11.66 crore. —*PTI*

IREDA Q4 profit drops 1.7% to Rs 492.63 cr

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

IREDA's net profit declined 1.77 per cent to Rs 492.63 crore in Q4, compared with Rs 501.55 crore last year, due to higher expenses. Total income rose to Rs 2,181.28 crore from Rs 1,915 crore, while expenses increased to Rs 1,562.14 crore from Rs 1,285.91 crore. For FY26, IREDA posted a net profit of Rs 1,874 crore, up from Rs 1,698 crore in FY25, with annual income rising to Rs 8,338.89 crore from Rs 6,755.69 crore. The company announced a final dividend of Rs 0.75 per share, with total dividends for the year at Rs 1.35. Loan sanctions increased by 9 per cent to Rs 51,883 crore, and the loan book grew by 22 per cent to Rs 93,069 crore. —*PTI*

India's tobacco Quitline helped 2.32L smokers

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

India's National Tobacco Quitline Services (NTQLS) received nearly one crore calls and has helped more than 2.32 lakh people quit smoking over the last 10 years. According to data released on the eve of World No Tobacco Day, young adults aged 18-24 years accounted for the largest number of quitters, with 91,933 people giving up tobacco. The Union health ministry launched the toll-free quitline (1800-11-2356) on 30 May 2016 and is anchored at the Vallabhbhai Patel Chest Institute, Delhi University. The NTQLS data showed that between May 2016 and April 2026, the counselling services for quitting tobacco received 99.31 lakh calls on its interactive voice response system. During the period, 6.75 lakh tobacco users registered with the service and 2,32,870 successfully quit tobacco, which is a 34.46 per cent "quit rate". —*PTI*

Govt clears funding for Rs 60,000 cr scheme in Andhra

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

The National Steering Committee (NSC) said on Saturday that it approved an investment plan for the Visakhapatnam ITI Cluster in Andhra Pradesh submitted by ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India under the Rs 60,000 crore PM-SETU scheme. This marks the first-ever Strategic Investment Plan to be cleared under Pradhan Mantri Skilling and Employability Transformation through Upgraded ITIs (PM-SETU). The approval of the Visakhapatnam Cluster represents a significant step towards transforming Industrial Training Institutes into industry-managed, outcome-oriented institutions capable of responding to evolving workforce requirements. PM-SETU is set up to transform 1,000 Government ITIs through an industry-led Hub-and-Spoke model. —*PTI*

Govt flags oil, El Nino risks to economy

FinMin warns of rising inflation as global environment becomes volatile amid Iran war

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

With weather forecasts pointing to a below-normal monsoon due to El Nino paired with likely moderation in economic activity, overall consumption demand may face headwinds in the coming months. According to a finance ministry report on Saturday, India's near-term economic outlook is one of cautious resilience.

The global environment has become materially more challenging, the latest Monthly Economic Review said, as the West Asia conflict has emerged as a major shock to an already fragile global recovery — its effects increasingly visible across energy markets, supply chains, trade routes, and financial conditions.

The divergence between retail inflation and wholesale prices signals that upstream cost pressures are building, and the passthrough to consumers — limited so far — may not be far behind, the report said, warranting vigilance on the inflation outlook. The recent hike in petrol and diesel prices may activate direct and indirect transmission channels, and any further escalation in energy prices could narrow the existing cushion more quickly than anticipated.

A major shock to our already fragile global recovery, the West Asia effects energy markets, supply chains, trade routes, and financial conditions —*AI*

However, across emerging markets, the impact remains uneven; energy-importing economies face mounting pressures from currency depreciation, capital outflows, and higher import bills, while commodity exporters remain relatively better positioned, it said.

The report said the Indian economy maintained its growth momentum in April 2026, with E-way bill generation, Purchasing Managers' Indices (PMIs) and electricity consumption remaining in expansionary territory.

The moderation in the Eight Core Industries Index and fuel consumption signals that global headwinds are gradually finding their way into select segments of domestic activity, it said.

A deficient monsoon could add food price pressures on top of energy-driven ones. However, second-round effects and their persistence must be evident in the data for policy responses to be triggered, it said. Looking ahead, the report said, the duration of the Strait of Hormuz disruption remains the single most consequential variable for India's external and price outlook. —*Agencies*

Jal Shakti ministry advocates budgeting as water demand rises

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

India which accounts for 17.5 per cent of the global population and 11.6 per cent of the world's livestock, could see its irrigation water demand rise to 807 billion cubic metres (BCM) by 2050. Agriculture which accounts for 80-90 per cent of water use in rural areas was also adding pressure on the country's water resources, according to the estimates made by the Jal Shakti ministry.

According to the Central Water Commission's study, "Reassessment of Water Availability in India using Space Inputs, 2019", India receives average annual precipitation of around 3,880 BCM. After accounting for natural losses such as evaporation and other factors, average annual water availability is estimated at 1,999.20 BCM.

Against this backdrop, the Ministry of Jal Shakti has stressed the need for water budgeting and said India must move away from a supply-driven approach towards demand-based and planned water management systems. Water budgeting enables communities to assess water availability and demand, and supports informed decision-making across agriculture, domestic use, livestock and industry, the ministry said. —*PTI*

NSE revises F&O trading hours, to close by 3.40pm

MUMBAI, 30 MAY

The National Stock Exchange (NSE) has announced changes to trading modalities in the equity derivatives segment, extending the normal market closing time for futures and options (F&O) contracts by 10 minutes from 3 August 2026, following the introduction of a Closing Auction Session (CAS) in the equity cash segment.

According to an NSE circular, the normal market close time for equity derivatives will be extended to 3.40 pm from the current 3.30 pm, while the trade modification end time will remain unchanged at 4.15 pm.

The move is aimed at aligning derivatives trading with the newly introduced Closing Auction Session in the cash market, which will run from 3.15 pm to 3.35 pm and determine the official closing price of stocks.

Under the revised framework, F&O traders will have an additional 10 minutes after the start of the cash market's closing auction to hedge, adjust, or unwind positions based on evolving price discovery in the underlying securities. The extension is expected to reduce uncertainty around end-of-day pricing and help traders better manage exposure linked to the final cash market close.

Normal market close time for equity derivatives will be extended to 3.40 pm, instead of 3.30 pm —*x*

However, there will be no change in the pre-open session timings, pre-open close, or the normal market opening time for the derivatives segment.

NSE also said that the volume-weighted average price (VWAP) window used for close price computation in derivatives contracts will continue to be based on the last 30 minutes of trading but will now be calculated using trades executed between 3:10 pm and 3.40 pm, instead of the earlier 3.00 pm to 3.30 pm time slot. —*ANI*

IN A RECORD

Foxconn okays $0.22/ share cash dividend

TAIPEI, 30 MAY

Shareholders of Taiwan-based manufacturing giant Hon Hai Precision Industry Co, known internationally as Foxconn, approved a proposal on Friday to issue a record-high cash dividend per share of NTUSD 7.2 (USD 0.22) on the company's 2025 earnings.

Based on its 2025 earnings per share of New Taiwan Dollar 13.61 (USD 0.42), the dividend payout ratio will be 52.90 per cent, marking the seventh consecutive year the company has had a payout ratio above 50 per cent.

The iPhone assembler and AI server are expected to issue a total of NTUSD 100.93 billion (USD 3.08 billion) in cash dividends.

Focus Taiwan CNA reported the NTD 7.2 cash dividend as the highest declared by the manufacturer since its 1991 listing on the Taiwan Stock Exchange.

In 2025, Hon Hai posted a new high for net profit of NTUSD 189.35 billion (USD 5.78 billion), up 24 per cent from a year earlier, yielding earnings per share of NTUSD 13.61 (USD 0.42).

Its consolidated sales of NTUSD 8.1 trillion (USD 247.31 billion), up 18 per cent from a year earlier, also smashed records.

In its annual report, Foxconn said it expected to leverage its automated production capabilities and global supply network to support clients on AI, as spending on AI infrastructure is forecast to grow at a double-digit pace globally this year, according to Focus Taiwan CNA. —*ANI*

Govt exempts import duty on cotton till 30 Oct

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

The government on Saturday exempted all customs duties on cotton imports for five months till 30 October of this year. In a notification, the finance ministry said the import duty exemption will be effective from 1 June.

The duty exemption will help increase availability of cotton for the Indian textile sector.

The temporary duty exemption is expected to reduce input costs across the textile and apparel sector, thereby providing targeted relief to manufacturers and consumers, while also keeping the interests of domestic farmers in mind.

Overall, the measure is anticipated to have a positive impact on the performance of the domestic textile industry.

Especially small and medium enterprises will be ensured better availability of cotton in the market, said the Ministry of Textile. —*PTI*

Transport body appeals for diesel price cuts amid fall in crude rates

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

The All India Motor Transport Congress (AIMTC) urged Prime Minister Modi on Saturday to reduce diesel prices, citing a decline in international oil rates.

"Internationallly Brent crude is declining sharply from its earlier highs. Global reports indicate that crude prices have fallen nearly 20 per cent during May 2026, one of the steepest monthly declines in recent years.

Despite this easing trend in global markets, the benefit has not yet been adequately reflected in domestic diesel prices," said AIMTC National President Harish Sabharwal.

Diesel accounts for nearly 60 per cent of commercial vehicle operating costs, and sustained high fuel prices are hitting lakhs of truck operators, small fleet owners, drivers and their families hard.

According to Sabharwal, fuel costs have also contributed to higher logistics expenses, inflationary risk, and costs on essential good.

AIMTC said the road transport sector — the backbone of India's economy and lifeline for the uninterrupted movement of essential goods — has urged the central government to pass on the benefits of lower crude prices to consumers and the transport community. —*PTI*

India, EAEU mulling trade deal: Russian Minister

MOSCOW, 30 MAY

India and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) are discussing a "limited and temporary" trade arrangement covering selected groups of goods as part of negotiations on a proposed free trade agreement, Russia's Economic Development Minister Maxim Reshetnikov said.

Describing the negotiations as "complex", Reshetnikov said on Friday that India's requests were "ambitious".

"Therefore, we are discussing a limited and temporary free trade zone, for a list of goods defined by product groups," the minister said.

Earlier, Russian President Vladimir Putin said negotiations on trade liberalisation between India and the EAEU had gained momentum.

The five-member economic bloc includes Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia. —*PTI*

Banks' RoA to slip 10-15 points on lower treasury income: Report

MUMBAI, 30 MAY

The Indian banking sector's return on assets (RoA) is expected to decline to 1.15-1.2 per cent this financial year from around 1.3 per cent last year, due to lower treasury income and pre-emptive provisions ahead of the anticipated credit loss (ECL) framework, according to a Crisil Ratings report.

The report states sectoral RoA will remain above the 20-year average of 0.8 per cent and the 10-year average of 0.6 per cent.

The moderation in profitability is mainly driven by reduced treasury gains as bond yields normalise and banks increase provisions ahead of the ECL framework implementation from 1 April 2027.

"Outstanding deposit rates fell around 50 basis points against a decrease of 80 basis points in lending rates last fiscal," said Subha Sri Narayanan, director at Crisil Ratings.

Indian banking sector's return on assets is expected to decline by 1.15 to 1.2 per cent this financial year —*ANI*

While net interest margins (NIMs) are expected to stay stable at around 2.9 per cent this year, after declining 20 basis points last year, the report added that NIMs may correct from the over 3 per cent seen last quarter but remain aligned with last year's average.

The report also forecasts a moderation in total other income by 0.05-0.10 per cent from 1.2 per cent last fiscal.

This is mainly due to lower treasury income after bond yields fell sharply in the first half of the previous year, boosting gains on investment portfolios. —*ANI*

LANDMARK POLICY SHIFT

CSR funds via social stock exchanges: Govt

NEW DELHI, MAY 30

The Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) has notified the Companies (Corporate Social Responsibility Policy) Amendment Rules, 2026, enabling companies to undertake Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities through "Zero Coupon Zero Principal Instruments" (ZCZP Instruments) listed on Social Stock Exchanges.

Companies can now deploy up to 10 per cent of their annual Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) spending through instruments listed on Social Stock Exchanges (SSEs), a move that is expected to boost funding for non-profit organisations and expand social financing through regulated capital market platforms.

Welcoming the move, the National Stock Exchange (NSE) said the amendment would enable corporates to channel CSR contributions to eligible not-for-profit organisations (NPOs) registered on the Social Stock Exchange through ZCZP instruments.

According to NSE, the change is expected to strengthen the credibility, transparency and scale of social financing in India by allowing corporates to support impact-led organisations through a regulated and disclosure-driven platform.

The amendments came into force on 27 May 2026, the date of their publication in the Official Gazette.

Under the amended rules, a "Not for Profit Organisation" (NPO) will have the same meaning as assigned under Regulation 292A of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Issue of Capital and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2018.

The notification also introduces a definition for "Zero Coupon Zero Principal Instrument", describing it as a security issued by an NPO registered with the Social Stock Exchange segment of a recognised stock exchange as per SEBI regulations. —*ANI*

AI could impact India's IT job market: EY report

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

Economy Watch Report 2026 —*EY*

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is "expected to have a long-term impact on the employment of India's skilled labour force," and its IT services-led growth model, according to EY's latest Economy Watch report.

The May 2026 edition states that the rapid evolution of AI will reshape employment patterns globally and could affect India's large skilled workforce, which has traditionally benefited from the country's booming IT services sector.

"Alongside, the fast-paced evolution of AI is expected to have a long-term impact on the employment of India's skilled labour force, which had, hitherto, found placement in the lucrative job market linked to IT services," the report said.

While AI offers opportunities for innovation and productivity, EY highlights "the potential risks that technological disruption may pose to employment if workers are unable to adapt quickly in order to meet changing skill requirements."

The report notes these developments could influence India's growth "both in the short and long run" and should be incorporated into future the nation's economic planning. —*PTI*

IPL 2026 FINALS

AGGRESSIVE RCB LOOK TO TAME GT IN SEARCH OF SECOND TITLE

AHMEDABAD, 30 MAY:

In a fascinating battle of ideologies, the well-balanced and bold Royal Challengers Bengaluru will have to subdue a phlegmatic Gujarat Titans to lift their second consecutive IPL title here on Sunday.

On the paper, the reigning champions are the overwhelming favourites against the 2022 winners because of the fearless, high-risk game that they have been playing in this tournament so far. It had landed them in trouble occasionally but Virat Kohli, Devdutt Padikkal, Tim David, skipper Rajat Patidar, Phil Salt, when available, and Venkatesh Iyer have relentlessly pounded the opposition with single-gear batting.

The nature of pitches or oppositions' bowling strategies have had little effect on their battering ram approach, and no other team has managed to go past 200 as often as they did in this edition of the IPL.

Patidar's calm approach to captaincy too has added to Royal Challengers' stability as a team across the last two seasons. Though not as evocative as former leaders Kohli or Faf du Plessis, there is a certain assuredness about the way the 32-year-old does his job, keeping both the superstars and greenhorns in side at ease.

The RCB also have a stingy bowling unit, stifling the rival batters from the power play phase. But the Bhuvneshwar Kumar-led attack will have to be at their absolute best against the in-form Gujarat top-order.

In a tournament where the batters made optimum use of power play scoring over 11 or 12 runs an over, GT openers — skipper Shubhman Gill and Sai Sudharsan — have been happy to maintain a run-rate just above 9. This linear build-up might be a conventional approach to Power Play, but it is partially because GT have a rather soft middle-order and the top three — Gill, Sudharsan and Jos Buttler need to do the heavy lifting.

To their credit, Gill (722, strike-rate: 163), Sudharsan (710, SR: 159) and Buttler (507, SR: 157) have delivered almost consistently. They will have to do the job once again in the match that matters the most, and GT's home record this season —five wins in seven matches — offers a crumb of comfort as well.

The Royal Challengers' batting order gives them an undeniable edge because of its depth and the presence of range-hitters throughout. But GT's bowling line-up has the wherewithal to stop the marauding RCB batters, particularly if the Ahmedabad pitch offers grip to them. —*PTI*

RCB captain Rajat Patidar with Gujarat Titans skipper Shubman Gill ahead of the finals ***X/@RCBTweets***

Sanga questions Curran's absence from IPL

MULLANPUR, 30 MAY

Rajasthan Royals head coach Kumar Sangakkara has questioned the last-minute injury pull-out from England all-rounder Sam Curran and said the BCCI must continue to ensure that foreign players meet their contractual obligations throughout the Indian Premier League.

Curran had withdrawn from the IPL citing a season-ending groin injury. However, he is back in action having played three games for Surrey in the T20 Blast back home.

Overseas players' availability has always been an issue in the IPL. This season, Mitchell Starc and Pat Cummins turned up for their respective teams in the second half of the competition due to niggles. The BCCI already has a two-

Sooryavanshi ready to play for India: Sanga

MULLANPUR, 30 MAY

Vaibhav Sooryavanshi's performance against world class bowlers in the IPL is an indicator that he is more than ready to play for India, said Sri Lankan legend and Rajasthan Royals head coach Kumar Sangakkara.

The 15-year-old had a phenomenal first full season in the IPL as he aggregated 776 runs at a staggering strike rate of 237.31. He could well end up as the leading run getter of the tournament if Shubman Gill or Sai Sudharsan don't surpass him in the final on Sunday.

Having taken the likes of Jasprit Bumrah, Kagiso Rabada and Pat Cummins to the cleaners over the course of the two month long competition, Sooryavanshi has reinforced the popular belief that he is rarest of rare who would serve India for long.

After endorsements from former cricketers including the legendary Sunil Gavaskar, Sangakkara too indicated that the left-hander is ready for the highest level.

"You never know if anyone's ready until they play. And with everything Vaibhav's shown against some of the best bowlers in the world, I think he's more than ready to take on any challenge that you throw at him. And I'm sure that he'll get that call-up very, very soon," said the Sri Lankan after Royals' exit from the IPL. —*PTI*

Vaibhav Sooryavanshi had a phenomenal first full season in IPL as he aggregated 776 runs at a staggering strike rate of 237.31 —***PTI***

Larry King, ex-husband of Billie Jean King, dead

CALIFORNIA, 30 MAY

Larry W. King, former husband of Billie Jean King who partnered with her on the creation of the WTA Tour and the "Battle of the Sexes" tennis match, died on Friday. He was 81.

Larry King and Billie Jean King met at Cal State-Los Angeles and married in 1965. Billie Jean King credited him as "one of the unsung heroes in the establishment of women's professional tennis in the early 1970s." "Larry's intelligence, love, commitment and humor helped me navigate my career for more than 20 years," Billie Jean King added in a statement, saying: "We were married for 22 years and in business together for decades. He was involved behind the scenes when the Original 9 signed our $1 contracts and he and I co-owned several tournaments on the Virginia Slims Tour." Together, Larry and Billie Jean King founded World TeamTennis, after Billie Jean was long interested in a team format for the sport. The WTA Tour was formed in 1973, before King went on to beat Bobby Riggs in the "Battle of the Sexes," which remains the most-watched tennis match in history. —*PTI*

—*ANI*

Odisha Gymnastics uses dead prez's name on letterhead

BHUBANESWAR, 30 MAY

Odisha Gymnastics Association secretary Ashok Kumar Sahoo has apologised for the continued use of late president Samir Dey's name on the association's official letterhead, describing it as an "unintentional mistake".

The apology came after PTI reported that invoices related to the National Gymnastics Championships were issued on a letterhead bearing the name of Dey, who passed away in November 2024.

The Nationals concluded here earlier this month.

"I, Ashok Kumar Sahoo, Honorary Secretary, Odisha Gymnastics Association, took notice of the story published in different media channels about the mention of our late President Shri Samir Dey's name on our letterhead. It was an oversight and an unintentional mistake," Sahoo said in a statement. "We run our association transparently. However, I apologise for the oversight and we will rectify it as soon as possible," he added. —*PTI*

Neeraj's advice helped me break records: Para athelete Antil

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

Legendary Neeraj Chopra's priceless advice during the World Para Championship last year resulted in his world record-obliterating effort of 74.82m, said two-time Paralympic gold medallist Sumit Antil.

Antil shattered his own world record of 73.29m by an incredible 1.53 metres in the men's javelin F64, to claim the gold at the 8th Indian Open Para Athletics International Championship in Bengaluru on Wednesday.

The silver medalist -- Maharashtra's Sandip Sargar with 62.88m was almost 12 metres short of him. "Neeraj bhai guides me from time to time. He came to see my throw at the Para World Championship in New Delhi last year. He pointed out a few shortcomings to me. So, I am benefiting from that here," Antil told PTI in an exclusive Zoom interview from his hometown in Sonipat on Saturday.

"My coach and Neeraj bhai are good friends, and they talk to each other about my technique. So, all of us together are breaking the world records again and again. And 75 metres for a para-athlete is a very long throw," Antil added.

Antil, who had also trained alongside Tokyo Olympic gold medallist back in the day, couldn't stop talking about the kind of influence he has had on his career.

"Sometimes it feels nice to be compared with Neeraj bhai because he is also my idol. But, when the comparison is done in the wrong way you just wonder why it is happening because I and Neeraj are in absolutely different categories (able-bodied and para)—so why the comparison?

"I mainly focus on taking tips from Neeraj bhai from time to time and talking to him. As an athlete, he is very strong, but as a person, he is even better," Antil observed. —*PTI*

Double paralympic gold medallist Sumit Antil competes in the men's F64 javelin throw event during the 8th Indian Open Para Athletics International Championship 2026, in Bengaluru, Karnataka —***PTI***

'I haven't failed, I'm fighting the system'

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY:

Defeat on the mat did not make Vinesh Phogat feel like a loser.

After her comeback bid ended in the Asian Games selection trials on Saturday, the former world championships medallist declared that she had already won by returning to competition after motherhood and by standing up to a system she claimed had done everything possible to keep her away from wrestling.

"I have not failed at all. I am fighting the whole system and I am still standing with pride on the mat again," Vinesh told after her 4-6 semifinal loss to Meenakshi Goyat, while reiterating her ambition of competing at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

Minutes after suffering defeat, Vinesh launched a scathing attack on the wrestling administration, alleging discrimination, mental harassment and attempts to block her return to competitive wrestling despite court orders in her favour. "They wanted to stop me from returning to the mat, but I am standing here again. I am proud of what I have achieved in these 10 months. "I know the system will continue to create challenges for me, but I have hope that through hard work I can leave the system behind and move forward," she added, refusing to view the semifinal defeat as a setback

Vinesh, who was competing for the first time since her heartbreaking disqualification from the Paris Olympics final in 2024, said her biggest achievement was returning to elite competition after childbirth. She said returning to competition after motherhood and after months of legal and administrative battles felt like a victory. "It has been only 10 months since my son was born. I am standing on the mat again and competing against the younger generation. I am proud of myself. I hope I can inspire my son and many women wrestlers," she said.

Vinesh described the Delhi High Court order that enabled her participation in the trials as a landmark moment for women wrestlers seeking to return after motherhood. "A girl is coming back to the mat after becoming a mother. The path has opened. Sooner or later there has to be a policy. Women wrestlers who want to return after becoming mothers should get a fair opportunity and some relaxation," she said. —*PTI*

Vinesh Phogat, in blue, competes against Jyoti in a 53kg category wrestling match during the Asian Games selection trials, in New Delhi, —***PTI***

Women's Hockey: India lose 2-3 against Aus

PERTH, 30 MAY:

The Indian women's hockey team lost 2-3 against hosts Australia to share the four-match friendly series 2-2 here on Saturday.

India came out strongly in the contest, taking a 1-0 lead in just the second minute when Navneet Kaur converted a penalty corner to put early pressure on Australia.

In the second quarter, Deepika Soreng (23th) doubled India's lead with a neat conversion. It remained 2-0 at half-time.

Australia fought back in the third quarter, levelling through strikes from Abby Wilson (42nd) and Olivia Downes (44th) in quick succession. A late strike from Courtney Schonell (58th) gave the hosts a narrow 3-2 win.

Despite the result, India can take plenty of positives from the tour.

Having bounced back from an opening-game defeat to win the next two matches, the Indian team demonstrated resilience, tactical discipline and a potent attacking threat throughout the series, continuing to build ahead of the upcoming season that begins with the FIH Nations Cup in New Zealand.

India had lost 1-2 against Australia in the series opener, but bounced back strongly to beat the hosts 4-2 in shootout after both the sides were locked 1-1 at the end of regulation time in the second match.

India then defeated Australia in the third match to take a 2-1 lead in the series.

The Indians have impressed in most aspects of the game in the tour so far, especially in defence and midfield.

The tour Down Under served as important preparation ahead of the Women's Nations Cup in Auckland from 15 to 21 June.

The ongoing tour also holds greater significance ahead of the World Cup in Belgium and the Netherlands from 15-30 August. —*PTI*

FRENCH OPEN

Djokovic's loss to teen Fonseca ensures a new Grand Slam winner

PARIS, 30 MAY

There will be a new men's champion at the French Open after Novak Djokovic followed Jannik Sinner out of Roland Garros in a five-set stunner on Friday.

Brazilian teenager Joao Fonseca beat 24-time major winner Djokovic 4-6, 4-6, 6-3, 7-5, 7-5 in the third round to follow Thursday's huge upset, when No. 1 Sinner — last year's runner-up lost to 56th-ranked Juan Manuel Cerundolo.

"Ten minutes after the match I could realize a little bit what I did, what I achieved," the 19-year-old Fonseca said. "How difficult it was and how amazing it was for me."

Djokovic's latest quest for a record 25th Grand Slam singles title was ended and it was just the second time he lost from two sets up, the other also coming in Paris in 2010.

Along with Daniil Medvedev, Marin Cilic and Stan Wawrinka, all the men's major winners are out, thus guaranteeing that a new pair of hands will raise the Coupe des Mousquetaires trophy aloft on 7 June on Court Philippe-Chatrier.

"Of course, Jannik and Djokovic out, there's more chances," said Fonseca, who next faces two-time runner-up Casper Ruud, who beat Tommy Paul 4-6, 6-7 (4), 6-4, 7-6 (4), 7-5.

Second-seeded Alexander Zverev, the 2024 runner-up, also advanced to the fourth round with a 6-4, 6-3, 5-7, 6-2 win late Friday over Frenchman Quentin Halys.

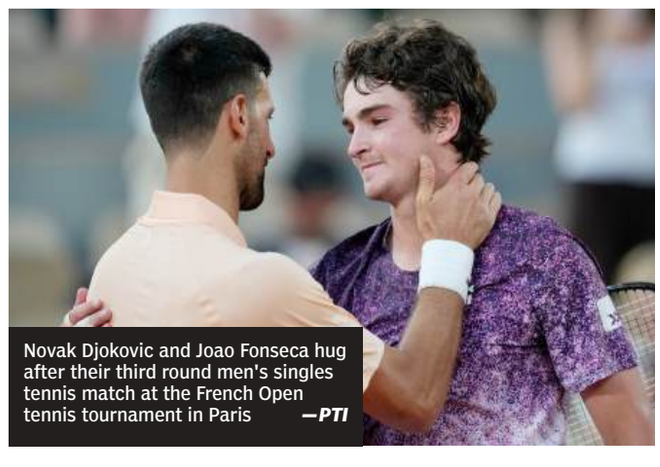
The 39-year-old Djokovic faded as the court slowed in the evening cool.

"Tough one for me to lose," Djokovic said. "I was barely standing on my legs toward the end of the match."

In the final game, Djokovic had a break point for 6-6 but Fonseca served out with three consecutive aces and became the first teenager to beat Djokovic at a Grand Slam tournament.

"I just enjoyed being on court and what a pleasure it was. It's my first stepping on court against him," Fonseca said. "We still think he's 20. At the end of the match I think he was more fit than me, that's crazy."

Fonseca wished his mother in the crowd happy birthday and thanked all the Brazilians who turned up to watch. —*PTI*



Novak Djokovic and Joao Fonseca hug after their third round men's singles tennis match at the French Open tennis tournament in Paris —***PTI***